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The Conservative Case

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In this book Viscount Hailsham gives the most comprehensive re-statement of the Conservative attitude since Lord Hugh Cecil's *Conservatism* in 1912. The first half of the book, devoted to principles and basic ideas, is a substantially revised version of *The Case for Conservatism*, which was specially written for Penguin Books and first published in 1947. The second half deals with current political arguments between the major Parties. For many years one of the most colourful and controversial figures in politics, Lord Hailsham today writes with the added authority of Chairman of the Conservative Party.

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A PENGUIN SPECIAL

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THE CONSERVATIVE CASE

VISCOUNT HAILSHAM



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FOREWORD

WHEN I first produced *The Case for Conservatism* in 1946 the fortunes of our Party were at a low ebb, and what was written then was largely an act of faith in the future. But it was also partly a contribution to the strictly contemporary politics of opposition. On reading it through again after twelve years I find remarkably little which I would have wished unsaid, but a good deal which has ceased to be topical.

On the whole I believe that the theoretical exposition of the Conservative outlook has worn well, and after eight years of Conservative rule I feel tempted to say that what was then asserted defiantly as a statement of faith can now be put forward even more confidently as the fruit of experience. These Conservative ideas have proved themselves in practice.

Clearly, however, the book needed rewriting and bringing up to date. As part of this process it has been possible to shorten it, since I had not the time nor leisure to replace the more ephemeral parts with anything like so detailed an analysis of the current situation. Indeed, the work would not have been possible without the help of Mr Peter Goldman, C.B.E., and, if justice were done, his name might well appear beside mine as joint author. The result is in no sense an election manifesto or a party programme. Were I preparing such a document, or were I writing in place of the present volume a full defence of eight years of Conservative Government, there is much of the theoretical material I would omit, and much of more immediate interest I would include. What I have attempted is no more than a new edition of a work on the Conservative outlook on British politics, which I hope has not yet quite lost its contemporary message.

HAILSHAM

June 1959

Part I. Preliminary

1. THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONSERVATISM

To an impartial observer it would seem paradoxical that any sober critic of our times should suppose that we might change too little or too slowly. For in all parts of the world the past half century has been an age of revolutionary change, rapid, radical, and cumulative. All humanity has come within its ambit. It has affected all peoples, nations, and languages. No aspect of human life has seemed unaltered, neither the purely mechanical and external, the artistic, the intellectual, the social, the moral, the political, nor the spiritual. Nor does it appear that any human being can arrest its course. In so far as it can be brought under control it would seem that it can be moulded only in accordance with existing trends.

Although exceptional, such periods are not without precedent, and from such precedents we may even venture to generalize. We remember an earlier age like ours in Periclean Athens, precariously balanced on the fragile foundation of her supremacy at sea. The stormy hundred and fifty years preceding the fall of the Roman Republic was just such another, and such no doubt was the Renaissance in Italy, the Elizabethan era at home, or the revolution in France. Such periods are brilliant, bloody, and sensational. A generation may mark an epoch, setting the course of human history for centuries. High drama is their constant characteristic, wars between empires, races, and languages, internal convulsions and civil strife, clashes of religions and systems of thought. These, it is said, are times for greatness, and indeed they are ever distinguished for the high demands they make on human nature. Hence they are noted for sharp and

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tragic contrasts: high courage and pitiful cowardice; supreme devotion and hateful cruelty; contemptible betrayal and glorious loyalty. In such an era nothing seems excluded from the ambit of human experience except perhaps the monotonous or the well assured.

But, above all, in times like these the signs and symbols which have guided the lives of men for centuries suddenly become unreliable and obscure. Lamps by whose light generations of humble folk have made their way grow dim and fail at last. In the general obscurity all truth seems veiled, and in its eclipse all manner of night birds come out and flap their wings. In the universal deluge of ideas men swim about amid the intellectual wreckage of their culture like torpedoed seamen, clinging to different coloured bits of straw, none sufficient to support a human soul.

This is the opportunity of the false prophet. Systems of ordered thought usually have their own means of judging nonsense. But in the absence of accepted, and objective, standards no fallacy so ludicrous, no falsehood so fantastic but has its devotees. Cranks and charlatans pullulate like flies on a midden. It is the age of grotesque and perverse fanaticisms, of bigotries which would be contemptible if they were not also dangerous. For this is the generation of the big lie, the mass delusion. Or rather it is a generation in which the infinite variety of error large and small is endlessly displayed in a multitude of different guises and combinations. Only the obvious seems not worth saying; only the truth remains in want of publicity. The fantastic is lauded as beautiful, the perverse as orthodox; only the good is despised as sinful or corrupt, and every kind of evil is permitted to parade under the name of virtue.

These times, rightly regarded as heroic, produce an abnormal quantity of villainy and human suffering, smugly accepted by the multitude except when it directly affects themselves. Some fatuous ass described this as the century of the common man. We are more than half-way through it, and what a century! Belsen and Buchenwald are no isolated phenomena, no absurd anachronisms, no strange monsters born out of time in a generation of humanitarianism and piety. The so-called century of

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the common man is one in which there has been a complete retrogression from the humanitarian ideals nourished by our fathers. More common men have been tortured, more done to death more brutally, more starved, more mutilated, more condemned to rot their souls in prison in twentieth-century Europe than at any time since the Thirty Years War. The century of the common man is the century of his crucifixion at Vimy and Passchendaele, at Gallipoli, Ypres and Mons, in Warsaw and Stalingrad, at Lidice and Guernica, at Nagasaki and Hiroshima, in Athens and Rome, Rotherhithe, Poplar and Rotterdam, all along the weary track from Tunis back to Alamein, at Dien Bien Phu, in Budapest, and in the towns and villages of the Holy Land itself. In numberless and nameless places he lies forgotten except by those who loved him, and his survivors still pursue the unending struggle for power in the name of some race or ideology.

The cause or occasion of the revolution in our times has been the coming of the machine to human lives. But its real challenge, like that of all such periods, is spiritual rather than political and economic. The economic and political tensions which exist on the surface are merely symptomatic of the deep tension between modern scientific knowledge and power and our traditional ethic and culture.

The various 'isms' which have afflicted the modern state are not so much truly political phenomena as new religions. No one has managed greatly to improve the traditional classification of political societies into monarchies, oligarchies, democracies, and dictatorships or tyrannies. But the new politicians are concerned with something more profound than politics; they are concerned with ideologies, that is to say, with religions, and these are dangerous and may mean life or death.

And what a variety of religions we have to choose from. On one thing only all are agreed. The traditional religion is exploded. The traditional ethic is irrational. The traditional order is out of date. We must have all things new. The house is swept and garnished. But where is the new tenant? Alas! there are seven new tenants, and each more powerful than the last. Each claims that the others are anathema. Each calmly vivisects a

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living gobbet off the truth and triumphantly parades the gory fragment as the whole body. Each maintains that it differs from all the others in every particular, but really resembles the others in all its salient characteristics.

In such times confusion and bewilderment is perhaps the frame of mind of the majority. 'Πάντα ῥεῖ' ('all is flux'), said Heraclitus, who lived in such a period. 'What is truth?' asked Pontius Pilate, and all the confusion and all the bitterness and disillusion of the heirs to the period of the Gracchi, Sulla and Marius, Julius, Pompey, and Antony was in the question.

Others grasp at one of the new religions eagerly, mainly for want of an alternative. Faced with the obvious absurdity of their own belief, they justify themselves to their critics by a challenge which does not strike them as ridiculous. 'What is *your* policy? What would *you* do? What do *you* say then?' – oblivious of the fact that to any honest man even scepticism is preferable to error.

But there is another possibility. The author of the hundred and nineteenth Psalm lived perhaps in just such another age of change. For while change leads some to scepticism, bewilders others, and stimulates others again to invent new and fantastic theories of the universe, there are some too whom it drives with complete assurance to seek and worship the Immutable. 'For ever, O Lord, is thy word settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; thou hast established the earth and it abideth. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.'

Political Conservatism is not a new religion (or a religion at all) and not a new ideology. In these mad times Conservatives suffer from what would be insuperable disadvantages in the struggle for power were it not for the fact that they are part of a religion, but not a new one.

For Conservatives do not believe that political struggle is the most important thing in life. In this they differ from Communists, Socialists, Nazis, Fascists, Social Creditors, and most members of the British Labour Party. The simplest among them prefer fox-hunting – the wisest, religion. To the great majority

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of Conservatives, religion, art, study, family, country, friends, music, fun, duty, all the joy and riches of existence of which the poor no less than the rich are the indefeasible freeholders, all these are higher in the scale than their handmaiden, the political struggle. This makes them easy to defeat – at first. But, once defeated, they will hold to this belief with the fanaticism of a Crusader and the doggedness of an Englishman. One of the earliest English Conservatives, the author of *Hudibras*, expressed in a single savage couplet his contempt for those

Who think religion was intended
For nothing else than to be mended.

This sentiment still animates the Conservative when he faces the political bigots of our time. It will win in the end. Whatever the fanatics may think, in this at least Conservatives have the vast majority on their side. The man who puts politics first is not fit to be called a civilized being, let alone a Christian.

Conservatives do not believe that the whole art and science of government can be summed up in some convenient phrase or catchword like 'Socialism' any more than the whole art of medicine is contained in an advertising slogan like 'night starvation'. They believe that there is an art or science of politics. They believe that disregard of its principles leads to untold suffering and inconvenience; their correct application to modest, but noteworthy, advantages. An attempt will be made in this book to state some of these principles and their application. Moreover, Conservatives believe that this store of wisdom is not something fixed and unalterable which we have received from our ancestors but a treasury to which it is the duty of each generation to make its characteristic contribution. But it follows from this that Conservatives reject any of the various 'Copernican' or revolutionary theories of politics which are current in our time. They do not believe that each generation in turn should start from scratch, abandoning all the wisdom of the past; on the contrary, they consider that progress consists in each generation beginning at the point where their fathers left off. If we acted as if progress consisted in scrapping the achieve-

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ments of the past, Conservatives do not think we should get very far.

The Conservative does not believe that the power of politics to put things right in this world is unlimited. This is partly because there are inherent limitations on what may be achieved by political means, but partly because man is an imperfect creature with a streak of evil as well as good in his inmost nature. By bitter experience Conservatives know that there are almost no limits to the misery or degradation to which bad governments may sink and depress their victims. But while others extol the virtues of the particular brand of Utopia they propose to create, the Conservative disbelieves them all, and, despite all temptations, offers in their place no Utopia at all but something quite modestly better than the present. He may, and should, have a programme. He certainly has, as will be shown, a policy. But of catchwords, slogans, visions, ideal states of society, classless societies, new orders, of all the tinsel and finery with which modern political charlatans charm their jewels from the modern political savage, the Conservative has nothing to offer. He would rather die than sell such trash, and consequently it is said wrongly by those who have something of this sort on their trays that he has no policy, and still more wrongly by those who value success above honour that he ought to find one. But if he is to be true to the light that is in him, the Conservative must maintain that the stuff of all such visions political is either illusion (in which case they are to be pitied) or chicanery (in which case they are to be condemned). The aim of politics, as of all else, is the good life. But the good life is something which cannot be comprehended in some phrase or formula about any political or social order, and even if it could be so comprehended it could not be brought about, in the main, by political means. The Conservative contends that the most a politician can do is to ensure that some, and these by no means the most important, conditions in which the good life can exist are present, and, more important still, to prevent fools or knaves from setting up conditions which make any approach to the good life impossible except for solitaries or anchorites. A depressing creed? A negative creed? No! A Holy Gospel! All the great evils of our time

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have come from men who mocked and exploited human misery by pretending that good government, that is government according to their way of thinking, could offer Utopia.

The Conservative thinks that in political life it is every bit as important to combat evil as to create good. Unlike the seven new tenants of the house, he holds to the Old Faith that man, apart from the grace of God, is not perfectible. Conservatives read with impatience *Men like Gods* and prefer *The Time Machine*. Both are fantasies, but the one is a false myth, the other more like the truth. Conservatives have observed that H. G. Wells, who despite *The Time Machine* was an ardent perfectionist, died in ultimate and irretrievable despair about the future of Homo Sapiens. Conservatives, where they are not Christians, which the wisest of them are, would agree with him, but cannot make out why so intelligent a man took more than seventy years to discover what they regard as an obvious truth. Accordingly, Conservatives do not expect to found a society wherein a perfected human nature will function contentedly, requiring no more attention than a well-oiled machine. They are not careful to use theological terms, but, whatever the theological implications, they are convinced that nothing is more clearly taught by all human history and experience than the fact in human nature which our forefathers simply described as original sin. They believe that persistently in human life, in our own nature no less than in others, is an active positive principle of evil, and that part of the constant duty of the statesman is to combat its operation. Our Liberal forefathers expressed one aspect of this when they said: 'The price of Liberty is eternal vigilance.'

Unlike their opponents, the last thing Conservatives believe is that they have the monopoly of the truth. They do not even claim the monopoly of Conservatism. Modern Conservatives believe in the Liberal democratic state as it has gradually developed according to the British tradition. This means that, despite the dangers which they see in their opponents' policy, they do not believe that the good of Britain would be attained if the Conservatives held a monopoly of power. On the contrary, the whole essence of the type of democracy in which they put

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their trust is that the public good is attained by the interplay of rival forces, of which they recognize themselves to be but one. The whole basis of modern Conservatism is the rejection of the absolutist claims of the modern Socialist state. They hold with Acton that power tends to corrupt, and absolute power to corrupt absolutely. They do not, therefore, seek to exterminate their opponents, even in the sense in which after the election of 1945 the late Professor Laski urged the Labour Party to 'exterminate the Tories'. As a corollary they feel themselves entitled to make use of the true lessons taught by their opponents. They see nothing immoral or even eccentric in 'catching the Whigs bathing and walking away with their clothes'. There is no copyright in truth and what is controversial politics at one moment may after experience and reflection easily become common ground.

Unlike many of the left wing parties, which are often irremediably tied to some fixed theory of the state, Conservatism is not so much a philosophy as an attitude, a constant force, performing a timeless function in the development of a free society, and corresponding to a deep and permanent requirement of human nature itself.

In the sense of a universal spirit opposed to restless and reckless change, it is as old as the Garden of Eden, where it has been suggested that Adam represented the conservative qualities of contentment and stability whilst Eve was over-eager for novelty and liable to be led away by seductive and dangerous slogans such as 'Eat more Fruit' or 'Free Fig Leaves for All'. Lord Macaulay made the same point in more solemn and sonorous prose when he spoke of the 'diversities of temper, of understanding, and of interest, which are found in all societies and which will be found till the human mind ceases to be drawn in opposite directions by the charm of habit and by the charm of novelty'.

Simple reluctance to change, however, though often legitimate and fruitful, is no sufficient basis for a longstanding and mature tradition of political behaviour. What distinguishes British Conservatism is that while its ideology and religion are anchored to eternal precepts, its practical approach, which

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seeks a synthesis between old and new, remains empirical and at times even frankly experimental. Contrast the successive parties of the left against which we have waged political warfare through the centuries, tied to an ideology each time essentially ephemeral and to a practical approach fundamentally doctrinaire. That is why, although we have been worsted in many battles, the Conservative Party has survived the generations and, though perennially abused as obsolete, it has lived to bury, body and soul, successive hostile armies.

We were abused by the Roundheads, and we remained to see a popular Restoration. We were abused by the Whigs, and we lived to see them swallowed up in the Liberal Party. We were abused by the Liberals, and we have survived to see them degenerate into a little heterogeneous mutual-admiration society. We are now abused by the Labour Party, and without being in the least impatient we realize that, unless disaster overtakes our country first, one day we or our successors will stand crêpe-hatted and mournful beside the open grave which, like all their predecessors, the Socialists will have dug for themselves.

Other parties may be wedded to fixed and unalterable theories of the state. For better or worse, the Conservative Party is not. Its eternal and indispensable rôle is to criticize and mould the latest heresy of the moment in the name of tradition, as tradition has itself been enriched and moulded by all the transient theories of the past, knowing full well that what seems at one time an unanswerable and cogent system will in the course of years crumble and disappear from view to form part of the rich soil of culture which it will be the duty of future Conservatives to defend.

Conservatives, therefore, see nothing inconsistent in having opposed Whiggery in the interests of the Crown, Liberalism in the name of Authority, Socialism in the name of Liberty and even of the Liberal State. Their function has been to prevent the unbalanced view of these theories held in the passion of the moment from causing irretrievable error, to insist upon the application of indispensable principles which may for the moment be unfashionable to adopt, and to adapt to tradition so much of the new doctrine as seems of permanent value.

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It would be the greatest of mistakes to view this function as primarily negative. Traditional principles are of eternal value; their application, even their applicability, is eternally changing. Conservatism cannot discharge its rôle simply by mouthing the slogans and battle cries of the past. Its business is to say what the application of these principles is to the present and to preach this application in the form of a concrete and practicable programme of government. There is therefore no inconsistency in a Conservative describing himself as a reformer. It does not follow because Britain must always have a navy to sail the seas that this must eternally be driven by sail or even steam, or fire guns or travel on the surface, and if originality and enterprise in the individual must eternally be the fountain of what is new and adventurous in society, it by no means follows that any magic ensures that a limited liability company with capital divided into debentures, preference, ordinary, and deferred shares will always be the vehicle of its inspiration. There is nothing more absurd in a Conservative Government possessing the initiative in change than there is in a Liberal Government opposing tariff reform or a Socialist opposition rejecting year after year proposals for family allowances. The function of Conservatism is to protect, apply, and revive what is best in the old. He therefore is the true Conservative who seeks to fit the old culture, the old humanism, the old Christian tradition of Europe to the world of radar and the nuclear bomb in such a way that our Christianity masters the bomb and not the bomb our Christianity. Upon the success of his endeavours largely depends the question whether the brave new world will be a paradise or a purgatory for the common man.

Part II. Basic Conservative Ideas

2. THE RELIGIOUS BASIS OF SOCIETY

I HAVE pondered desperately long before writing this chapter. There is nothing I despise more than a politician who seeks to sell his politics by preaching religion, unless it be a preacher who tries to sell his sermons by talking politics. The introduction of religious passion into politics is the end of honest politics, and the introduction of politics into religion is the prostitution of true religion.

Nevertheless I am compelled to write what I believe to be true, and I am fortified in my belief by the fact that I can discover no important writer on Conservatism who has not been driven to the same conclusion.

There can be no genuine Conservatism which is not founded upon a religious view of the basis of civil obligation, and there can be no true religion where the basis of civil obligation is treated as purely secular.

This has been the conclusion of so many different Conservative thinkers that I should be utterly untrue to the Conservative tradition as well as to my own conviction were I not to say so.

Take Burke, for instance¹:

We know and we feel inwardly that religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and all comfort. . . .

All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awefully impressed with an idea that they act in trust; and that they are to account for their conduct in that trust to the one great master, author, and founder of Society. This principle ought even to

1. *Reflections on the French Revolution*. London (The World's Classics) 1907, pp. 98, 101-2, 112.

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be more strongly impressed upon the minds of those who compose the collective sovereignties, than upon those of single princes.

The English people are satisfied that to the great the consolations of religion are as necessary as its instructions. They too are among the unhappy. They feel personal pain and domestic sorrow; in these they have no privilege.

Or take Disraeli:

The most powerful principle which governs man is the religious principle. . . . A wise Government, allying itself with religion, would as it were consecrate society, and sanctify the State. . . . Broadly and deeply planted in the land, mixed up with all our manners and customs, one of the main guarantees of our local government, and therefore one of the prime securities of our common liberties, the Church of England, is part of our history, part of our life, part of England itself.¹

Society has a soul as well as a body. . . . The spiritual nature of man is stronger than codes or constitutions. No Government can endure which does not recognize that for its foundation, and no legislation last which does not flow from that fountain. The principle may develop itself in manifold forms, in the shape of many creeds and many churches. But the principle is divine. As time is divided into day and night, so religion rests upon the Providence of God and the responsibility of man.²

Industry, Liberty, Religion, that is the history of England.

Or consider this moving passage from Sir Winston Churchill's *My Early Life*, describing his escape from the Boers:

I was very hungry, for I had had no dinner before starting. I had scarcely slept, but yet my heart beat so fiercely and I was so nervous and perplexed about the future that I could not rest. . . . I found no comfort in any of the philosophical ideas which some men parade in their hours of ease and strength and safety. They seemed only fair-weather friends. I realized with awful force that no exercise of my own feeble wit and strength could save me from my enemies, and that without the assistance of that High Power which interferes in the eternal sequence of cause and effects more often than we are always

1. Monypenny and Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*. London (John Murray) 1916, vol. iv, p. 362. Speech on Church Rates.

2. Speech at Glasgow, 1873, quoted Monypenny and Buckle, vol. v, p. 265.

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prone to admit, I could never succeed. I prayed long and earnestly for help and guidance. My prayer, as it seems to me, was swiftly and wonderfully answered.

In an earlier passage he had described how his faith had overcome his doubts :

As it was, I passed through a violent and aggressive anti-religious phase, which, had it lasted, might easily have made me a nuisance. My poise was restored during the next few years by frequent contact with danger. I found that whatever I might think and argue I did not hesitate to ask for some special protection when about to come under the fire of the enemy; nor to feel sincerely grateful when I got home safe to tea. I even asked for lesser things than not to be killed too soon, and nearly always in these years and indeed throughout my life I got what I wanted.

For myself I say quite plainly that I can see no hope for secular society unless it be based upon a fundamental recognition of the spiritual nature of man and the providence of God, and in return I believe that religion owes to secular society the debt of recognizing that without the stability of the social order a full religious life becomes impossible except in the hermit's cell or in the monastery. I do not regard religion simply as a private fad, like having a hot-water bottle in bed – a legitimate idiosyncrasy, but one which has no important consequences for a man's neighbours. I do not think the secular organization of the community in the state is self-sufficient, and I do not think that a wise secular government can hope for the permanence of its institutions by adopting an attitude of indifference to religious truth – although it is driven, in a state like ours, to adopt an attitude of impartiality between a number of basically similar creeds.

The necessity of religion in secular society is to me demonstrated by three interdependent propositions.

First: Religion, that is the recognition of the spiritual brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God, is the sole philosophical justification for any sort of morality between man and man.

Second: Religion provides the moral basis of culture without

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which man is unable to live at peace with his neighbour. A common religious background is the only cement which unites man with man, nation with nation, and – just as important to a Conservative – present with past and future.

Third: Religion is the great governing wheel on the engine of human passion without which no passion, no love, no moral or political principle is valid or even legitimate. Later in this book I intend to develop some of the moral and political ideas which I hold as a Conservative. I begin by asserting all to be quite worthless except they are held and followed in a religious way. I believe in my country; I believe in our Commonwealth and Empire; I believe in liberty; I accept the secular authority of the state; profit and property and private enterprise are institutions I support; I desire to increase the material wealth and prosperity of my family and my country. Yet all these aspirations and beliefs are wrong, inconsistent, and dangerous heresies unless they are governed and limited by the love and worship of God – at once the hub and the fellow of the wheel of life.

Yet if secular society owes a debt to religion, religion also owes a debt to secular society. Religion preaches the good life, but it is perhaps increasingly the business of the statesman to provide the material conditions in which it may be lived, the houses, the food, the secular institutions, all the physical apparatus of education.

Moreover religious and secular life, originally united in the nation, remain united in the institution of the family, the foundation alike of secular and religious life. It is the business of the state to foster and support family life, but the core and centre of family life is its religious consciousness.

To my mind the history of the past two generations affords ample proof of the truth of what I have been saying. To me at least there is a close connexion between the two main movements of thought and practice during this period: the first the movement of human thought all over the world towards a materialist or positivist view of the Universe and away from a religious or even an idealist philosophy; the second, the real and very obvious retrogression from the humanism (I use the word in the sense in which Erasmus used it) of the nineteenth century,

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towards the abominations of Belsen, the rape of Budapest, and all the cruelties and inhumanities of our present age.

There are few who would deny the facts.

There is no need to labour the general retrogression from humanism. Bloodshed has marked the passage of the human race through time. Whether we seek the records of secular or biblical history, whether we dig in the sands of the Middle East to learn the lessons of archaeology, or seek in the rocks for the even older record of palaeontology, there is no record of any time when men have not killed one another in anger. Hitler was merely repeating the abominations of the red-coated soldiers of the Assyrians, who in their turn were following an immemorial tradition. Rabshakeh outside the walls of Jerusalem had nothing worse to offer than Belsen, nor is the displacement of vast populations behind the Iron Curtain out of keeping with the practice of the Babylonians and others in driving peoples into captivity. War and oppression have been the rule in human affairs; peace and liberty have been the exception.

There is one striking exception to this melancholy rule. In the whole history of mankind the nineteenth century (and particularly the nineteenth century in Christian Europe) stands out in marked contrast with almost all the rest of the human story. An incredible softening of manners, a rapid and widespread growth of humanitarianism – it is a century of few, short, and mercifully ‘untotal’ wars, of swiftly enlarging cultural boundaries, of increasing literacy, of romantic idealism. At the turn of the century whole peoples espoused the cause of a Dreyfus (1897), or were shocked at the wholesale destruction wrought by an earthquake in San Francisco (1906).

Who can deny that there has been a retrogression since that date? Even we have been compelled to do with our bombers over Germany in a single night that which made San Francisco petty in comparison. The Americans at Nagasaki and Hiroshima did that, in broad daylight with one aeroplane, which made the Ruhr raids seem like child’s play. But perhaps it will be said that these were legitimate, if ruthless, deeds of war. They pale in comparison with what men have done to their neighbours. One does not need to be a supporter of the Tsarist régime

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to sicken at the tales of the Revolution in 1917. But this was a prelude to what has since taken place – the bitter revenge taken by a primitive people upon admitted oppressors. Since that date we have seen the whole horror of ancient cruelty re-enacted. Did the Athenians exterminate the Melians? The Melians were about ten thousand men, and their women were spared. The Germans applied the whole ingenuity and organization of modern physical science towards the mass extermination of villages, towns, and even a whole nation.

Belsen was the end to which our century of enlightenment brought us at last. Not the thousand crucified corpses of slaves on the Appian Way caused such a cry of horror. The heaped remains of human beings piled like things, and hidden beneath the ground in pits, marked the end of the latest of our modern tyrannies.

But to what has it given place? One would have thought that any generations who had known the horrors of Belsen and Buchenwald, who had seen the terrible consequences of Jew-baiting, brawling, class war, and aggression, would in mere revulsion turn to the one true lesson to be learnt from these disasters, by pagan or Christian – the brotherhood of man, the urgent, inescapable necessity of treating each human being primarily as a human being, and not as a 'Fascist beast', a Jew, a German, a member of 'Mongol hordes'. Such are the disagreeable names which we choose to apply to our fellow-creatures in order to justify our evil thoughts about them.

There has been no such reaction towards humanity. The end of the war has been the signal for a new outburst of hatreds and violence, each directed against some human object. Cold war has become the condition in which the greater part of mankind must now conduct its life. Militant nationalism has been aroused by chauvinist dictators and inflamed by communist subversion. In Africa, in Asia, in the Middle East, and in Latin America, bloodshed and revolution have held sway, and a hundred million souls in Europe alone have been submerged by the relentless tide of a pagan tyranny. Where will it end?

There is no end to the principle of hatred so long as it is permitted to feed on human action, except the exhaustion which

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is close to death. I can see no trace in the happenings since the end of hostilities to justify the view that the brotherhood of man has become the guiding principle of the world of nations.

I turn therefore to my other observation – the conscious retrogression of modern society from the idea of God. The reasons for this movement are complex. The fact is undeniable.

The Reformation destroyed the unity of Western Christendom and overthrew the teaching authority of the Church on which it had been based. Biblical criticism, and the scientific discovery that the world is a great deal older than a literal reading of Genesis would lead us to suppose, overthrew the kind of interpretation of the Bible which had been built up in Protestant Christendom to take the place of the teaching Church.

Free discussion and popular education after a long period of ignorance would, I am inclined to think, have led naturally, and almost healthily, to a period of doubt and self-questioning, even if the other factors making for infidelity had not been operating. But the movement took a definite form. There is no doubt that of the various political revolutions which have taken place since the turn of the century the majority have been consciously anti-Christian, and that in the democracies where the same political forces are at work in a free society the movement has taken the form of the worship of Mammon and Venus; in the dictatorships that of Moloch or of Mars. In the unthinking multitude these movements have succeeded to the extent of creating indifference; in organized minorities they have actually produced active hostility to the Church.

These, then, are two of the characteristics of our time: a retrogression from humanity, and a conscious abandonment of religion. What is the bearing of these two characteristics upon one another and upon the World Order?

My answer is that they are related to one another as cause to effect, and that their combined relationship to the World Order is that they are the root cause of nearly all the troubles with which that Order is faced at the present time.

About 1938 a very noble lord once said in my hearing: 'If there is another war it will be the end of God. The last war just about finished Him. But another war will be the last straw.'

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He was speaking of the Almighty as a member of the Opposition might have been speaking of the Conservative Government, and the fashion of blaming God as if He were a sort of universal Prime Minister is as natural in democracy as the far more dangerous fashion of treating a monarch as if he were a kind of terrestrial god is easy under a dictatorship.

But the truth seems to me to be plain. War was not due to any incompetence (if one may use the expression) on the part of some celestial Cabinet. The policy of that Cabinet is well known. It is to tell human creatures of certain rules which they ought to follow – truthfulness, kindness, chastity, respect for parents, and, above all, worship of God, and to leave them more or less free to follow them or not. Our ancestors learned and taught that a disregard of these rules brought calamity upon our heads, as apple-stealing might bring the slipper for a small boy, or burglary a prison sentence for a criminal – or even more inevitably. But the truth is far more simple. Calamity does follow from a widespread and deliberate disregard of the rules, but it follows, not as the sentence of the magistrate follows the crime, or as night follows day – it follows precisely as a skid follows from going too fast round the corner, or a mechanical breakdown from putting water in the petrol-tank.

The plain fact about war, poverty, persecution, and most disease, is that they are caused by a deliberate disregard of the natural law – which in its simplest and most universal form teaches man to love his neighbour as himself. This view is in my judgement inseparable from the religious view of life.

I therefore cannot divorce entirely my political faith from my ultimate view of reality. I do not think that there is any hope for the world or for my country unless men can come to regard themselves as members of a common brotherhood. But the brotherhood of man is philosophically meaningless and practically unattainable except in the light of the universal Fatherhood of God. No one talks about the brotherhood of barnyard fowls or even of Buff Orpingtons. Yet even the most primitive societies have been driven to accept a fraternal relationship based on some sort of common fatherhood as the basis of their society. To talk of a brotherhood transcending the bounds of

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physical fraternal relationships presupposes a kind of manhood inconsistent with materialist philosophy. The denial of the Fatherhood of God is the root from which spring quite naturally the various heresies which have afflicted the species in our time, the doctrine of race and of class, the worship of the State, the philosophy of dialectical materialism, or the more pragmatic and not less popular creeds of Get-rich-quick, or All's-fair-in-love-and-war. Of myself at least I know, and of others I believe, that my duty towards my neighbour, outside the bounds of enlightened self-interest, begins at the moment when I realize the utter worthlessness of self in the sight of the Father of us all. Neither of the two great commandments can be practised separately, for the love of God does not exist in the man who does not love his brother whom he has seen, and the love of man is impossible, or at least foolish, except in the grace and understanding bestowed by faith in, and love of, God.

I do not pretend that this creed is exclusively accepted by Conservatives, or accepted by all Conservatives. But it is an essential part of Conservatism as I see it, and as such it forms a necessary part of this book.

3. THE ORGANIC THEORY OF SOCIETY

CONSERVATIVES are sometimes impatient when they are asked to explain in simple terms 'what their party stands for'. Too often in asking the question the questioner is making the same assumption as his opponents.

These, in each generation, have 'stood for' some definite plan or conception of society which, in its day, has captured the simple-minded as being the last word in human knowledge. Such ideas were 'individual liberty', 'the nationalization of all the means of production, distribution, or exchange', 'equality', 'free trade', or the like.

Conservatives are not, as is sometimes alleged, insensitive to such ideas. But to Conservatives the whole assumption that it is possible to sum up human political needs in one of a series of catchwords strikes the mind as impossibly naïve. Nothing is more certain than that the latest ideas of one age are hopelessly dated and outmoded in the next, and Conservatives prefer to subject the 'spirit of the age' to a certain amount of honest scepticism in the light of their knowledge that each political nostrum will appear to succeeding generations as a dangerous and outmoded fallacy.

Instead of a clear-cut conception of an ideal society to which all nations should attempt to the best of their ability to conform, Conservatives believe in a somewhat more mature conception of the nature of political organization. This theory may be described as the organic theory of society.

A human community, they would say, is much more like a living being than a machine or a house. A machine or a house can be made to conform more or less to a plan. Given the materials, each can be altered more or less at will. Neither need, unless its makers desire it, possess an individuality. If parts fall into disrepair or become outworn, they can be ruthlessly

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scrapped and replaced. Each has an existence relative only to the needs and purposes of their users. Each can be replaced entirely if they suffer disaster.

By contrast, living creatures are not to be so used. Making or breeding them may be a scientific study. In a sense, by studying certain biological laws, they can be bred for certain characteristics, or trained in certain aptitudes. In that sense, they may be 'planned'. But it is a sense wholly different from that in which we lay out the ground plan of a house, or a 'blue-print' of a machine. Treating their ailments is indeed a science and an art, but it is a study not the least bit like engineering. At times, no doubt, surgical operations are desirable and even necessary. But such operations are never good in themselves, and often, to save life, inflict permanent loss upon the patient.

Like all analogies, this comparison must not be pressed too far. But two other distinct points of likeness can be noticed. As Burke wrote: 'A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.' No living organism can remain static and alive. If Conservatism meant 'no change', clearly the only truly Conservative organism would be a dead one. But Conservatives, of course, do not mean anything so silly. They believe that a living society can only change healthily when it changes naturally – that is, in accordance with its acquired and inherited character, and at a given rate.

Some four centuries before the birth of Christ, Plato had already remarked upon a certain general pattern in the constitutional development of the city states of the time. According to this pattern, monarchy gave way to aristocracy, aristocracy to democracy, and the chaos produced by democracy as then understood to dictatorship. Undoubtedly, this pattern has reproduced itself again and again in Western Europe since Plato wrote. The problem before lovers of democracy is to find a means of arresting this almost inevitable progression at the stage of democracy which they desire to perpetuate.

Similarly Conservatives have observed a certain common pattern in the great violent revolutions of our own time. There are, after all, now three classical models for the modern world – the English revolution of 1640–60, the French revolution of

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1789–1815, and the Russian revolution of 1917. Other parallels present themselves. History never exactly repeats itself, but there is sufficient general similarity to permit deductions to be drawn.

In each case there was a strong indictment to be drawn against the existing system of government. In each case a long period of more or less legitimate agitation punctuated by violent outbursts had led to no fundamental reform. In each case the refusal of the administration to yield to these dangerous symptoms produced in the end a revolt led by more or less moderate elements animated by the highest motives (Hampden, the Girondins, Kerensky). In each case the moderate elements who tried to govern constitutionally without the *mystique* of a traditional authority were overthrown by a more violent and ruthless minority who claimed that the revolution could only be saved by strong-arm methods (Cromwell, the Jacobins, the October Revolution). In each case the tyranny imposed by these fanatics led to a reign of terror. In each case the chaos of the terror was succeeded by a dictatorship (the Protectorate, the Empire, Stalinism). At this point the pattern diverges. Napoleon, as dictator, tended to resile from the policy of the revolution and to conform more and more to the traditions of a monarchy of the orthodox pattern. Cromwell showed the same tendency politically – without modifying the religious policy of the revolution. Stalin showed the same tendency to revert to Tsardom, whilst retaining much of the ideology of 1917. In the case of the English revolution, disgust at the tyrannical methods of military dictatorship brought about the restoration of the traditional monarchy tamed by the experience of Charles I. The French revolution ended in much the same collapse as Hitler brought on Germany and for broadly similar reasons. The history of the Russian revolution, as the zig-zagging policies of the post-Stalin period have demonstrated, is not yet complete.

From all this Conservatives cannot fail to draw certain lessons. The first is for themselves. To yield to legitimate pressure for reform is in reality the surest guarantee against revolution. Peel was severely censured by the political purists of 1846 for his policy of appeasement to the Free Traders. His reply to

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Guizot was to claim, surely with reason, that the absence of a revolution in Britain in 1848 was largely due to this policy.

A second lesson is of even greater importance. Reformers who put the revolution first and do not make due concessions to tradition, to the living nature of society which requires changes to be made gently, at a gradual speed, inevitably involve themselves in the use of dictatorial methods, and usually end by producing a reaction which defeats the very objects which they mean to serve.

Moreover, Conservatives also draw the moral that there is an advantage, even from the point of view of those desiring radical change, in preserving the *mystique* of a traditional authority. They believe that much of the bloodshed attached to revolution can be avoided when both sides can be persuaded to play the rules of the constitutional game. They point to the happy history of our own country since 1660. They observe the contrast between Britain with her traditional monarchy and France based on a revolutionary republic. They think the credit for this lies more with Clarendon than with Cromwell, more with the Tories than the Whigs, more with Disraeli than Gladstone. They admit that the times involve us in one radical change after another. But they consider it proved by experience that such change can only be safely effected within the framework provided by a constitution sanctified by traditional authority and institutions, that it must be effected in a manner conformable to the traditional methods of procedure, and that, if confidence is not to be ruptured, it had best be effected by a group of men known to be devoted to the traditions of their country, in an atmosphere where the people are confident of the ability of the constitutional procedure to achieve reform, and in the willingness of all classes to accept it when fairly enacted. These views Conservatives do not claim to be the monopoly of Conservatives to-day, but they do claim that the fact that they are held, and so widely held, can be directly attributed to the influence of the devoted lives of Conservative statesmen in the past, acting in the belief that the traditional is the best corrective yet discovered for the unbalanced and ephemeral influence of the fashion of the moment.

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This brings us to a second point of comparison between societies and living creatures. Like creatures, human societies have individualities. These are ultimately undefinable, though they may often be understood in the light of geography, economic development, scientific apparatus, and racial qualities. Nevertheless, what is good for some is not necessarily good for all. Calvinists held that for individuals what is not a duty is a sin; Conservatives accuse their opponents of preaching a like heresy in regard to politics, for the Conservative theory of the individuality of human societies cuts at the root of the left-wing theories of an 'ideal state' or of an 'ideal man'. The perfect France or the perfect Britain may be far removed from the actuality of the France or Britain which exist to-day. But they are as different from one another, or from the perfect Russia or the perfect U.S.A., as the existing France and Britain differ from one another or the America or Russia of to-day. Perfection in human societies or human individuals no more mean that everyone should be alike than that perfection in horticulture would involve that all gardens should be built on one pattern growing flowers of identical size and colour. The theory of individuality involves an understanding of individual traditions, proclivities, and requirements. We do not necessarily grow more like one another as we grow better.

This theory of individuality leads Conservatives to regard askance all changes which are proposed at home simply with the object of making Britain conform to some ideal and rather tidy pattern. Changes they do not resent as such, but they are apt to ask that they should be introduced to deal with a concrete situation, to produce a concrete good result. Conservatives are not encouraged by the history of attempts to mould mankind on the bed of Procrustes.

The same theory also leads Conservatives to be extremely chary of criticizing too hastily the political institutions and customs of other countries. There is a sense, as will be seen, in which such criticism is well justified. All mankind, Conservatives hold, is subject to the Natural Law. But the Natural Law permits a very wide measure of individual choice; and circumstances of climate, geography, religion, and development make

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for a great variety of human institutions. Conservatives would fight and die to defend British Parliamentary institutions. Nevertheless they recognize that the maintenance of the full obligations of democracy down to its last refinement puts too great a strain on some societies in Asia and Africa. They detested the Hitler régime in Germany and they detest the Communist régime in Russia. Nevertheless, they are slow to condemn such régimes until the evidence condemning them is overwhelming, and even then will always hesitate to intervene to overthrow them unless and until their continuance is shown to be an intolerable menace to international security.

When, therefore, they are asked what their party stands for, Conservatives would do well to begin their answer by saying 'variety', and 'the kind of change which should take place in a healthy living organism'. They do not wish to see a static Britain playing a fixed and unchanging rôle or reflecting a firm and unalterable social structure conforming pedantically either to their own or anyone else's political ideas. In this we differ alike from the Society of Individualists, which appears to think that we can peg our society down to something like the structure it possessed in the nineteenth century, and from the Socialists, who believe that a swift and decisive revolution will take us to final stability under a new order. These views we believe to be dreams, false alike to history and to the nature of the times. We look for a Britain which will change as constantly in the future as it has done in the past, constantly reflecting new tendencies and new social forms, learning by failure every bit as much as by success, and possessing a social and political structure designed to render the necessary changes peaceful, smooth, and painless as changes can be.

Such a Britain would by no means conform to a single or wholly logical pattern. One of the marks of a healthy society is the rich profusion of social forms which it throws up. Such forms are seldom politically inspired, and form the natural barrier of defence between the individual and the State. Conservatives believe not merely in the separation and independence of Church and State under the law and under the political sovereignty of Parliament, but in the like independence for

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all the other societies and organizations which are at once the condition and the result, at once the glory and the cause, of a free society – trade unions, limited companies, co-operatives, literary and cultural societies, sporting clubs, associations of neighbours, societies of hobby-lovers, social centres, political and social groups – in short, all the things which people choose to do together, provided only that they do not contravene the general rules of law enacted by a Parliament which respects the natural law and the natural liberties of man. Variety and fluidity are, by a paradox, the marks of Conservative ideals, and what Conservatives criticize mainly in Socialism is its pedantic rigidity, and, once its fetters are riveted, its absurd, unreasoning, and unbending conservatism.

Such a Britain as we visualize would exist in a world full of nations as different from one another in custom, outlook, social structure, and constitution as individuals in Britain differ from one another. This does not mean, as will be shown, that Conservatives are enemies to the theories of international order which are abroad. It does mean, however, that Conservatives are automatically opposed to any theory of international order which makes any particular social theory, individualism, socialism, 'democracy', the American way of life, etc., a condition of international understanding. This may be 'One World', but unless there is room in it for difference, and constant change, and toleration of the idiosyncrasies of others, there will be no peace among the cities of the earth.

4. COUNTRY

CONSERVATISM exists, like other political parties, for the sake of promoting the good of the country in which we live.

The Conservative Party is based on its love of country. 'The Conservative Party is national,' said Disraeli, 'or it is nothing.' Britain is the first of our political principles, her honour – by which I mean the fulfilment of her moral purpose – her security, her prosperity.

By saying that our party is based on love of country we do not mean that only Conservatives are patriots. That would be a false and unworthy doctrine. Nor could any country long survive in which one party enjoyed the monopoly of patriotism.

Still less do we mean by love of country that false and tawdry sentiment summed up in the phrase 'My Country, Right or Wrong'. To love one's country truly, says Lord Hugh Cecil in his book *Conservatism* – and in this I think he does no more than echo Burke – is first to mean to make it lovely.

Nevertheless, by claiming love of country as the first of Conservative principles, I have in mind something quite definite and distinctive. I have no desire to traduce or misrepresent Socialist ideals on this point; if I did so, indeed, I should fail in the object which I have, which is to define differences in a form in which the definition will be acceptable even to those who are not Conservatives.

Most of us have heard, or read, some hundreds of Socialist speeches and articles in our time, and on the whole I do not think I am being unfair to Socialists when I say that Socialism derives its inspiration and policy from the differences and injustices which have existed among human kind for time out of reckoning, but which none the less it is our duty to seek to remedy in our time.

Conservatism begins from the opposite end.

Conservatism derives its inspiration and seeks to base its policy on what Conservatives believe to be the underlying unity

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of all classes of Englishmen, their ultimate identity of interest, their profound similarity of outlook, the common dangers and difficulties they have shared in the past, and with which they are still faced, and the necessity for unity as the true means of meeting them together. This does not mean that Conservatives are insensitive to the differences and injustices upon which Socialists love to dwell. It simply means that Conservatives consider superficial an analysis of politics which treats these differences as ultimate, or of the same importance as the unity of the nation.

The nation, not the so-called class struggle, is therefore at the base of Conservative political thinking.

Harmony, not struggle, is its ruling political objective. The health, security, and prosperity of Britain and of all its people is its first guiding political principle.

Conservatives place patriotism at the top of the list of civic virtues. While it is not true that they claim a monopoly of patriotism, it is true that during the period between the wars, and even, to a less extent, now, the burden of defending patriotism as the basis of civic virtue, or even as a virtue at all, fell mainly on Conservative writers and thinkers, who were much traduced and misrepresented as a result of accepting the task.

'Patriotism,' Nurse Cavell is alleged to have said, 'is not enough.' But Conservatives have had to point out that the modern heresy is to claim that this simple, even obvious, truth means that patriotism is an evil thing.

All human loves are capable of perversion when they are not subjected to the love of God.

Country, though not entitled to the absolute devotion due to God, is perhaps the highest of all the natural relationships which command affection, and it is no denial of this truth to admit that it is capable most easily of perversion.

This explains the Conservative emphasis on patriotism. Their meetings close with the National Anthem; their platforms are decorated with the Union Jack. Their speeches, eloquent or turgid, according to the ability of the speaker, contain frequent appeals to love of country or Empire and Commonwealth. All this seems to some of their opponents very vainglorious and

rather dishonest, since all those who have died for their country are not Conservatives. But such critics do not pause to reflect whether they do not sometimes claim for themselves a monopoly of the love of neighbours.

To Conservatives all this is very much beside the point. We should only be too glad if Labour meetings were decorated with the Union Jack or closed with 'God Save the Queen', or if Labour speeches were full of references to patriotism and the proud history of the British Empire. If this were so, it would not be possible to accuse us of monopolizing the sacred emblems of loyalty. We do these things because they express our own sentiments; others must follow their own conscience in the matter. They are free to conform or to dissent as they please.

But the truth is that Conservative philosophy does lay a most particular stress upon the duty of loyalty and the sentiment of patriotism. We do not claim that only we feel this emotion, any more than Christians claim that they are the only men to love their wives and children. Nevertheless it would be true to say that emphasis on the importance of the family tie is more marked in Christians than in certain others; if so, that is not the fault of the Christians.

Love of country, although 'natural', in the sense that a man who hates his country is in the general rule as contemptible as a man who hates his father or his wife, is not unreasonable nor necessarily exclusive. A Frenchman may love his country as the home of St Joan or St Bernadette, as the land of Racine or Molière, as the natural capital of the republic of *bons viveurs*, the centre of fashions, or the land of the principles of 1789. All these are reasonable sentiments inspired by his natural love of his country. We delight to admire in those we love the qualities they really possess and do well to pass over their failings.

Our love for Britain does not therefore involve any feeling of contempt for 'lesser breeds, without the law', but is none the less based upon a clear understanding of her great place in history, and, since this is a book about politics, and not about science, literature, art, religion, or manners, let us stress particularly her great place in the political history of the human race.

Before Britain placed representative government on the

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political map, democracy had bogged down at the stage of the City State. Greater areas, and in particular nations and empires, required to be governed by kings and aristocracies precisely because there was no machinery for government of such areas by any other means. The invention of Parliaments opened the door to political freedom which had been closed since Rome's Empire destroyed her civic liberties.

Free Parliaments were in part the result of successful rebellion against traditional kings. But Conservatives also rejoice in the fact that the course which events took in England enabled the British peoples to combine with the principle of reasonable discussion by representatives in Parliament the *mystique* and prestige of a traditional monarchy, symbolizing the unity of the nation above party strife and the respect and majesty of the law and of lawful authority over individual opinion.

Few of the events in many of the unhappiest countries in Europe would have been possible had events produced there the happy combination of factors which we enjoy.

Conservatives are glad to think that loyalty to this régime is not now a party matter, but they take a certain pride in this because they do not believe that this situation would have been achieved without the devotion and loyalty of past Conservatives.

Likewise Conservatives notice with pride that democracy has succeeded in maintaining authority in Britain precisely because we have evolved a type of democracy in which the executive is still sufficiently powerful to govern without yet achieving sufficient independence to be absolute or free of control. This is a rare combination of qualities. Most countries either have a strong executive, or a democratic form of government. To combine both is one of the hardest tasks of the maker of constitutions.

Conservatives rejoice immensely in the long tradition of humanism in English political life; its great line of social reformers, the kindliness of the classes to one another, the moderation and decency in which controversy is commonly conducted. That this is so is, of course, not a source of pride to one party alone; but to create such a situation demands generations of forbearance and decency shown by both sides to an

argument, and the Conservative Party has constituted one side to the political argument longer than any other. Conservatives insist that their emphasis on patriotism, constitutionalism, continuity, and tradition has been, perhaps, the decisive factor in bringing this state of affairs to pass.

Lastly, Conservatives assert that patriotism is the only condition upon which democracy or any other system of free government can be made to work. In this sense patriotism consists in a loyalty to the constitution of your country which stands over and above party affiliation, a loyalty which, as compared with that affiliation, is absolute and not conditional. Democracy fails in most countries where it is tried, and in most countries it is not tried at all because it so manifestly would fail. Tyranny and aristocracy are the normal forms of human government, not because *self-interest* (as Socialists would have us believe) is the main enemy of patriotism, but because group solidarity normally overrides patriotism. Where membership of a religious community, as in Ireland or India, where membership of a cultural or racial group, as in Palestine or pre-war Czechoslovakia, is regarded as the primary secular loyalty, resort has been had to force or to partition. Conservatives see in Socialist insistence on class consciousness, or loyalty to trade unionism, or socialism, just such a force as could similarly disrupt free government here.

For Conservatives sometimes see in Socialist writing and in Socialist practice¹ evidence of a tendency to treat their own loyalty as conditional on the achievement of Socialism; and in Socialist approaches to international affairs the recurrence of the attitude of the Jacobin :

A steady patriot of the world alone,
The friend of every country but his own.

1. I have tried to give examples of this in *The Left Was Never Right*. London (Faber), 1945.

5. THE COMMONWEALTH

THE great glory of Britain has not consisted only in her internal policies and constitution. Again and again her blood and treasure has been shed against absolutism on the continent of Europe. Her hatred of absolutism has been impartial as between right and left. Neither Louis XIV, Napoleon, Robespierre, nor Hitler could count Britain amongst their friends. We were not put off by specious and bogus crusades against Bolsheviks or aristocrats. A human being is a human being, and minorities, classes, and small nations have their rights. These are the rights which Britain's intervention has vindicated again and again. But for Britain, Europe would have reverted to spiritual and political dictatorship long ere this.

Our fight has always been uphill. Numerically we have never been a great world power. Traditionally, rather we have been as we are now, the greatest and most impregnable of the small powers, the smallest and in some senses the most vulnerable of the great. Our neighbours and adversaries have always been large, have ever commanded forces more compact, wieldy, and better prepared. Our main safeguard from their early attacks has been command of the sea. Our principal instrument in overthrowing them has always been the aid of those who but for our intervention would have been overwhelmed. Twice in our lifetime the miracle has been renewed before our eyes, and, if on each occasion men have been inclined to say of the existing moment 'This is their finest hour', it is because on each occasion before ever mounting perils we have been true to our rôle of Jack the Giant Killer. And we have a good many giants to our credit.

Nevertheless we did not do all this by courage, goodness, or luck alone. In all human affairs there are material factors without which the righteousness of a cause cannot normally prevail. We have fought to show that might is not right. But our successes, by their happy contrast to the sadder struggles of others

who have fought the same battle, have also demonstrated that right is not necessarily might.

The material factors which have made for our success are our geographical position, our power at sea, our commercial wealth, and our Commonwealth and Empire.

Conservatives are proud of, or rather thankful for, all these assets, and they do not consider it unworthy of the high moral and spiritual rôle which they think Britain has played and has still to play to determine to maintain these assets strong and ready for use.

The British Commonwealth is one of the most remarkable associations of nations ever known to history. It would be truer to say that it had no constitution than to describe at any given time the legal, political, racial, and sentimental ties which bind us to its several parts. But these tenuous threads have stood a higher tension than hawsers of steel. Twice in our lifetime the fraternal bond has been sufficient; on the latter occasion certainly, on the former perhaps, the scales were tipped by the presence on our side of these powerful and distant allies.

Yet the fabric of the Commonwealth has continued to defy human analysis or human prediction. On the one side, it has made nonsense of the critics who, in each of the three periods since the late Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, and in none more vigorously than in the years since the Statute of Westminster, have constantly proclaimed its imminent dissolution. But, at the same time, it has disappointed all those of its supporters and would-be Savonarolas who have sought to capture its spirit and imprison it in the fetters of legal preconceptions, formularized central institutions, or even firmly fixed relationships. Thus the Commonwealth has continued to baffle its critics and contradict its supporters. No fixed constitutional or political theory has persisted – not even the universal acceptance of the symbolism of the Crown. In Malaya, indeed, the symbol of sovereignty is not only not the Queen, but a different crowned head. Yet the association can continue and continues together. Its membership increases. It is certainly not less vigorous for being voluntary. It can hardly be described as less real because it defies description. If the past is any guide to its

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future, it can be not less resistant to decay, because no single criterion is seen to be necessary to its existence.

An English lawyer is tempted to place emphasis on the English common law as a common bond. But French law prevails in Quebec, Scots in Edinburgh, Roman Dutch in Ceylon, whilst outside the Commonwealth, Blackstone, Littleton, and Coke are revered in Washington and the Dublin four courts not less than in the Supreme Courts of Canada or Australia, or in the House of Lords. A social philosopher might be apt to talk in terms of families and clubs in describing the Commonwealth. Both give valuable parallels. But neither may be pressed too far. The family analogy breaks down with many of our new members, whose differing racial ancestry provides the most important contemporary challenge to conscience and prudence; while clubs demand subscriptions which, unlike the United Nations, the Commonwealth does not exact. A theologian might lay stress on the Christian religion and I myself would be the last to underestimate its influence. But the Christian test would exclude Pakistan and Malaya; and Ghana, India, and Ceylon are not even universally monotheistic. Canada itself would nowadays come under the ban if sterling were the test proposed by an economist, and on the same test Ireland would be included. Can we rely then on community of policy? At the best, that may well be an end to be sought; but it is an aspiration, and certainly not a fact. A recent Canadian Prime Minister said not so very long ago, 'The Commonwealth has no common policy', and though this fact may not be palatable, it is none the less a fact. Members of the Commonwealth frequently take different lines, and in many cases the separate initiatives of individual Governments have been of immense advantage in retrieving situations from deadlock. Nor can even the absence of thorny questions of dispute be asserted, for instance, between India and South Africa, or even India and Pakistan. A lover of English literature might propose a test in the English language. But a Canadian or a Welshman would reply at once that English, although general, is neither universal, exclusive, nor necessarily authoritative, and least of all in Canada or Britain. The only common institutions we can see beside the economic

pattern of the much modified Ottawa agreements are the position of the wearer of the crown in her capacity (strictly non-regal) as head of the Commonwealth; a common, but secondary, type of citizenship; and common membership of the Prime Ministers' Conferences. It is uncertain whether a member of the Commonwealth can be expelled, or after resignation readmitted, or whether a nation previously outside could ever formally be invited to join.

Conservatives conclude that it is hopeless to define the Commonwealth, impractical to devise central institutions for it, nonsense to despair of it, impossible to generalize about it, wicked to try and exploit it, extremely risky to predict about it.

All the same there are three points which are relevant in all these matters.

First, Conservatives would say that whilst everyone of the generalizations mentioned can be shown to be untrue by contrary examples, at the same time none is wholly false. The Crown, though not universal as an emblem of loyalty, is still a unifying influence. The common law, despite the local exceptions and the declining jurisdiction of the Privy Council, remains a bond which we can recognize. The English language remains an immense factor for unity. Though the Canadian dollar may be harder, sterling is still the currency in which the majority of the transactions between the members of the Commonwealth are carried out, and nearly half the international transactions of the world for that matter too. The Christian religion remains the inspiration of all the old, and some of the new, members. Agreement and collaboration is still the rule and not the exception, and no one who has been to international conferences doubts the reality of the tie, whether between Canada and India, or Canada and the United Kingdom, or the British Caribbean Federation and both.

The second point Conservatives would make is more obvious. The Commonwealth does not exist in a vacuum. It is an organism which can only be explained in terms of the contemporary world of which it is part, and particularly of the parts of the world of which its own several members are in each case inseparable components. You cannot understand the relation-

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ship even between Canada and Britain without knowing a little of the relationship between each and the United States, or even between each and the British West Indies or France, or the whole of North America and Russia. A knowledge of the same complex relationship between Britain and the parts of Asia is necessary before one can fully understand what India means to us or we to India, or for that matter what Australia and New Zealand mean to one another, or to Britain, or to the Middle East or Malaya. The British Commonwealth is in and of, and exists to serve, civilization in each of the continents. It is not too much to say that some part, or some member, of the British Commonwealth is an integral and indispensable part of each regional international community. This is a factor, making for peace and international expansion, of almost incalculable value in the international relationships of the present day. But it is also a factor necessary to the understanding of the Commonwealth itself. What the world is passionately looking for is some pattern of human behaviour less anarchic than mere nationalism, less offensive than traditional imperialism, some source of new wealth and investment for backward countries less impersonal than that provided by pure altruism, more disinterested than the economic aid showered by the great protagonists. Though most of us, and particularly those of us who are Conservatives, might desire something more showy and perhaps more intellectually satisfying, we cannot but be grateful that we have an association as flexible, as sensitive, as useful, and as effective as the British Commonwealth of Nations.

There is a third point. It is, perhaps, the most significant of the three. But equally it is the least easy to state. The significance of a human institution is only known when it is measured up against its purpose, and when that purpose itself is valued against the ultimate standards by which human things are appraised.

At first sight the British Commonwealth is among the least purposive of things, as the British, and their associates and friends, are amongst the most pragmatical of men. There is apparently a complete absence of theory about almost all our doings. Few books are written about being British, as there have

been about being German, or as there are about being Arab, or even being American. And if any books were written attributing some high theory to the British Commonwealth, I doubt if they would be read, or, if read, whether any heed would be paid to their teaching, or whether, if it were, the result would be agreement or discord.

All the same, Conservatives believe that this apparent formlessness and pragmatism about the Commonwealth is more apparent than real. Perhaps we do not go far enough back into its origins, or else fail to measure its significance against the realities of the day. The British Commonwealth in its present form goes back to the events of the American revolution. The true lesson of that revolution was that no country, no continent can hope permanently to govern another. It is a lesson constantly illustrated at various times and different places. But it is a lesson Britain learned in that Revolutionary War. No doubt temporary imperial systems have their place and, I should have said, a conspicuous value in the scheme of things. No doubt, also, there must be exceptions to every political generalization. But the truth is that the soul and independence of Britain were saved in the American War of Independence no less than those of America, and after nearly two hundred years it has become increasingly difficult to discern who became independent of whom in 1783 and who was the greater gainer. The truth is that we all gained, the United States, Britain, and Canada, yes, and all the unborn nations of the Commonwealth.

For the fact is that when, fifty years later, the Canadian sentiment for independence became clearly manifest, it neither came as a shock nor as the end of our family relationship. The British Commonwealth of Nations grew historically out of Lord Durham's reforms in Canada no less certainly than the American Constitution grew out of Yorktown and the Boston Tea Party.

Thus the Commonwealth is founded on both of two propositions, the first established by the War of Independence, that no nation can permanently hope to govern another and that it is thus natural for any people to demand independence of all others, and the second, established in Canada, extended successively to the people of the old Commonwealth, and since

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1945 to the various nations of the new, that independence does not necessarily mean separation of outlook, sentiment, or economics.

I have never myself thought, and I do not think now, that the human race will survive indefinitely in the nuclear age without some communal institutions which our fathers, and perhaps we ourselves, would recognize as a form of world government. We are, at the moment, far from such an achievement, and even if we were not, the British Commonwealth would neither be a substitute for it nor by itself a step on the way, since, as I have already pointed out, the British Commonwealth is an association of nations to whose spirit central institutions (of their own) have again and again proved repugnant.

Nevertheless, in the absence of common human political institutions, and even in the presence of them in a rudimentary form, such as they are to be found in the United Nations, the community of sentiment engendered within the Commonwealth is a cement between nations and races of the utmost value; and if, as I suppose, in some way which I am unable at present to foresee, more thoroughgoing international institutions manifest themselves at some time, I should still say that the existence within such institutions of the Commonwealth of nations in their special relationship with one another would prove an indispensable condition of their success.

Viewed in the light of its origin and history, it is difficult for Conservatives not to see in this community of sentiment between members of the Commonwealth a bond born of our common adherence to the political gospel of liberty under the law, fostered by individual relationships and economic ties, and rendered possible by that adherence no less than common origin. For all that there is of its very nature no system of mutual enforcement and no machinery of expulsion, our common association could not, Conservatives believe, long survive the renunciation by its principal members of their allegiance to liberty under the law. By the like token it can survive and develop precisely in a world where the principles of liberty under the law are recognized and honoured outside the circle of our own family of nations.

6. INTERNATIONAL ORDER

THIS is the place to consider the general Conservative approach to the problems of international order.

The clue to the British and to the Conservative philosophy of foreign politics lies in the revolutionary doctrine that in dealing with human beings means are at least as important as ends. This, of course, is a doctrine not confined to Conservatives and not confined to foreign politics. But it is not very common in this world. It was therefore with a real sense of gratitude that I found it thus nobly expressed by Mr Gollancz¹:

The answer is that in the human interplay it is means and not ends that are the effective reality. My end is dynamic in relation to me. . . . But it is only the means that are dynamic in relation to my neighbour. Only what I actually think or do in the immediate relation can affect the other party to the relation. It is my behaviour that is socially decisive, not the reason for my behaviour. If one man kills another, you show yourself civilized by considering the motive at his trial. But whatever his motive, the second man is dead.

The moral in foreign politics is surely obvious. Any attempt to found a foreign policy on an ideology – an attempt, for instance, like that to create a ‘Socialist foreign policy’ sponsored by Socialist dissidents in the period of Labour Government – is morally indefensible and likely to lead to war.

Whatever else may be uncertain about the future of international society, this much can be predicted with confidence – human societies are likely to differ in their social structure and in their political outlook for as long ahead as the most far-sighted of us can foresee. Any idea that we can solve the problems of war and peace by trying to persuade them all to think alike – even if we believe that our own way of thinking is demonstrably correct – can only precipitate conflict and not avert it. The problem of peace is to discover a means whereby differently minded nations can avoid war, not to invent a formula

1. *Our Threatened Values*. London (Gollancz) 1946, pp. 59–60.

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to which all nations to prove their rightmindedness must necessarily subscribe.

British foreign policy has long proceeded in this belief.

As between individuals of differing outlooks within a state, so between communities of opposing ideologies, the only secret of peace is the rule of law. It is true that we cannot feel as friendly to states which do not recognize the fundamental rights and dignities of man in which we believe, or to politicians in whatever land who would persuade the miserable and unfortunate to sell their birthright for a mess of potage. But with this notable qualification, what should determine our relation to foreign states is not so much our approval or disapproval of their domestic policy, as their conduct towards one another and, in particular, their conduct as judged in the light of the objective customary law of civilized humanity as extended by treaty or defined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Our respect for international law also leads us to preach continuity of foreign policy wherever possible between successive Governments in our country, even of opposing political complexion. In a democracy there is always a danger that the seesaw of domestic politics, after swinging as the result of change of mind on purely internal issues, may corrupt the good name of the nation for square dealing and consistency. Obviously nothing can be wholly exempt from the sphere of party controversy, and foreign politics, least of all, can be an exception to this rule; nevertheless, if we ever reached a state when our good friendship with countries which had done us no wrong depended on the co-existence between those countries of two democratic governments of similar political persuasion, the world would be in a state of uncertainty and confusion such as to make stable peace impossible.

When I wrote the first edition of this book twelve years ago, and immediately after the war, I said that the real question for the Russians, the answer to which would determine Conservative policy, was not one based on rival ideologies at all. The question was: 'Are you prepared to accept as your guide an objective standard of Right and Wrong? Or are you going cynically and ruthlessly to pursue at all costs what you consider

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to be the interests of your régime, without regard to the effect of your policy on the rest of humanity?' It is because the answer to this question was unfavourable, because the Russians were unwilling to allow an objective standard of right to prevail, but pursued instead a relentless and immoral policy of expansion based upon fear, force, and fraud, that the history of the post-war world took on its divisive and sombre character.

Conservatives are neither militarists nor pacifists. They reject as equal and opposite heresies the doctrine that might is right, which seems to them to deny all morality, and that right is might, which seems to them to fly in the face of all experience; their principle is law, and the objective standards of right and wrong. They make no secret of the fact that they regard one of the main purposes in foreign policy as being to safeguard and protect British interests. They see nothing wrong in this, so long as these interests are themselves legitimate, and so long as the methods chosen to safeguard them are lawful.

They therefore support the United Nations, and have made a leading contribution to its establishment, to its work and to the work of its Agencies. They also support such institutions as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which, owing to Russian jamming of the machinery of collective security, have come into being to buttress the authority of the United Nations by defensive arrangements of the kind provided for in Article 51 of the Charter. Where the immediate task of preventing international disaster was beyond the existing powers of the United Nations, at Suez, and later in Jordan, their intervention has been limited in scope, humanely carried out, reported at once, and suspended when the necessity for it disappeared. The moral basis for such action is that when anarchy exists, when there is no law, or no law which can be enforced, or no law which can be enforced in time, a nation has the same inalienable right as a human being to step in to put an end to the fighting and protect its own. Conservatives desire nothing so much as the establishment of a more effective system of international security, based on the rule of law, which would render such interventions unnecessary for the future.

7. AUTHORITY

'It is often assumed,' wrote Lord Hugh Cecil,¹ 'that Conservatism and Socialism are directly opposed. But this is not completely true. Modern Conservatism inherits the traditions of Toryism which are favourable to the activity and authority of the State. Indeed, Mr Herbert Spencer attacked Socialism as being in fact the revival of Toryism; he called it "the new Toryism".'

Lord Hugh Cecil went on in another passage which is even more definite:

The tradition of authority is naturally a Tory tradition, and, but for the influence of Conservative prudence and justice, the successor of the Tories might probably have been ready to use the authority of the State with a freedom we associate with Socialism.

In these days, when the main opponent of the Conservative Party is Socialist and not Whig or Liberal, it is important for Conservatives to remember that, traditionally speaking, Conservatives and Tories stood for a strong central Government, and their opponents for 'liberty' and 'individualism'. The Tory Party owes its origin to the friends of the Court in the reign of King Charles II, and down at any rate to the time of Disraeli liked to consider itself the special champion of 'authority', 'prerogative', 'establishment', and the power of the executive. Freedom from control has never been a Tory watchword, if this is to imply an absence of law or order at a time when either is threatened in any department of the national life. It may be that our present struggle is for the preservation of the ancient liberties which Liberals and Whigs won from the Crown in the past. It is none the less well for a writer on Conservatism to place 'authority' high in his list of Conservative principles.

Authority is the principle which requires a man to override his private judgement or desire in favour of a particular rule with which he does not agree simply because it is the law. Where

1. *Conservatism*. London (Home University Library) 1912, pp. 169, 210.

he agrees with it, or deserves to comply with it, there is no need for authority. Authority is always something which requires respect in despite of the freedom of the individual.

At one time it was claimed that the authority of law or government must always be founded on some evident principle of reason, for so only could it be reconciled with liberty. Some claimed legitimacy, others popular election, as the test. But neither experience nor principle supports this view. Conservatives have learnt that there is no divine right, whether of kings or peoples, in this matter. For so far as legitimacy is concerned, no authority is legitimate if you go back far enough, and as for popular election, a popularly elected tyranny deserves no more respect than a self-appointed dictator. All the same, the authority of each deserves in the main to be respected. Minorities, and breakers of laws, are very often right in their disagreement with particular enactments or governments. Nevertheless, it is more often their duty to obey the law, although it is unreasonable, because it is the law, than it is their privilege or responsibility to rebel against it. The right of unfettered private judgment on what is reasonable or otherwise in legislation is ultimately subversive of all authority or government.

Moreover, the history of states does not support the view that a reasonable authority, founded on some clear compact or self-evident claim to govern, has a better chance of claiming the loyalty or enthusiasm of its subjects than one whose claim is conditional and prescriptive.

There are few more popular or successful institutions than the British monarchy. There are few more important practical guarantees of the happiness or security of this country or the unity of the Commonwealth than its continuance. But on what self-evident principle of reason was it founded? The ancestors of the Kings of England were Kings of Wessex whose title over the other portions of their realm was that of conquest. Conquest, sanctified by Papal blessing, was the title of William I, from whom the legal authority of the English Kings is sprung. Conquest, again, established the Tudors on the throne. The Papal blessing was dispensed with at the Reformation, but without the loss of the Papally-bestowed title 'Defender of the

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Faith'. The one remaining title of legitimacy, succession by descent, was broken by the revolution of 1688 and finally disposed of in 1714. Yet descent is still the first qualification of a British sovereign.

The present Royal House derives its title from an Act of Parliament which claimed to override the principle of legitimacy as it was then understood, yet legitimacy is the whole basis of the *mystique* and majesty of the Accession and Coronation ceremonies by which our monarchs are invested with authority.

Nevertheless the Crown so established and handed down to its present wearer as a result of the operation of the Abdication Act is the source of all legal authority in this country. We cannot afford to sneer. We, who have seen the collapse of the authority of the French Republic precisely because it lacked the *mystique* and prestige of the British monarchy, can ill afford to deny the advantage which attends the possession of a traditional, as distinct from a revolutionary, constitution. The one may be more logical; the other appears to keep out the weather more successfully. Conservatives therefore believe, in the main, in the acceptance of established authority, wherever it is found, without enquiring too closely into its documents of title. They cannot profess to justify this principle by any abstract argument of reason. They acknowledge that America's written Constitution is in a sense older than their own unwritten one. But much practical advantage is on their side, and most historical precedents proclaim them right.

The first stage in the progress of a society from barbarism to civilization has been the creation of a system, always more or less imperfect, in which anarchy and lawlessness have given place to law and order.

Historically speaking, there is no reason to connect this process with the moral excellence or legitimist claims of the successful authority. The Heptarchy was not ended by a declaration of the rights of man or a federal constitution on the American model. It was destroyed by the rising power of the Kings of Wessex. The unity of France grew, or waned, by the rising or falling authority of the French monarchs, themselves by origin

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only Mayors of the Palace. Bismarck and Cavour united their respective countries round existing royal houses by the arts of policy and of war. Mr Walter Lippmann writes:

If the historic experience of Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Italy is a guide, it tells us that the large states have grown up around the nucleus of a strong principality – England, Île de France, Muscovy, Piedmont, Russia. By conquest, by Royal marriages, by providing protection to weaker principalities, by the gravitation of the smaller to the bigger, the larger national unions were gradually pulled together.

Obviously, here there is nothing of logic; there can be no claim to legitimacy if one goes back far enough. But, historically speaking, the development of large areas of law and order depending upon the authority of some established organ of government has been the means whereby civilization has grown up. It was the same in the ancient as in the modern world, the same in legend as in history. We do not hear of Menes uniting the Kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt by any superiority in title or wisdom, and we read how Deioces, the founder of ancient Media, resorted to guile. The title of Rome to the greatest system of ordered government the Western World has known was by arms alone. Legitimacy is only one of the matters which constitute authority, prescription another. Neither is indefeasible, but both in the absence of a stronger claim are to be respected. Constitutional authority remains the first article of a Conservative creed.

8. THE LIBERAL HERESY

THE great attack upon constituted authority came from nineteenth-century Liberalism. This body of doctrine aimed at reducing the authority of the state to a minimum. All organs of government were brought under constitutional checks and then subordinated altogether to elected assemblies. Even when so restrained, it was thought meet to curtail to the lowest degree the sphere of their activity. The medieval state had by one means or another a considerable hold upon the private lives of its subjects. This sway was normally exercised in the interests at least of the externals of Christian morality. But the whole sphere of private conduct was, it was now asserted, no affair of the State. The widest possible freedom of opinion and expression, the easiest latitude of personal morality, the most absolute privacy of matters pertaining to the individual, were more or less successfully established.

But the most startling successes of Liberalism were won in the economic field. The traditional medieval polities of Europe favoured, at least in theory, a planned economy. Various, and in the mass considerable, restrictions of private trade were imposed in what was conceived to be the interest of the community – sometimes its moral or spiritual, sometimes its material interest. In Britain, and particularly in England, this had taken the form of mercantilism, a deliberate system of government interferences designed to improve the prospects and to some extent to control the direction of British trade. In the earliest days the wool industry enjoyed a peculiar protection by the provision that dead men must be buried in shrouds of pure wool. By the Navigation Acts British bottoms were given a preference almost amounting to monopoly; public authorities had settled wage rates since the Statute of Labourers. The lending of money at usurious rates of interest was proscribed. When imports of corn began, agriculture was given bountiful protection by the various Corn Laws, and duties on sugar, tea, and other

commercial produce were not only designed to raise a substantial revenue but in many cases also graduated to benefit British colonies abroad. The power of the state extended also to the control of labour.

'The Poor Law', writes Lord Hugh Cecil, 'was only the more amiable part of Tudor Policy in dealing with poverty. . . . No one was permitted to be idle. The plan was certainly what we should term Socialistic.' ¹

In other European countries public policy was pursued perhaps with less enlightenment; at other times other objects were conceived as desirable. In the main, however, the general view reflected by legislation at the beginning of the nineteenth century was that, whereas manufacture and commerce were properly carried on by private individuals, state interference and regulation in the interest of the public was part of the normally accepted and entirely acceptable prerogative of government.

Inspired by the sacred writings of Adam Smith among economists and of Jeremy Bentham among political theorists, the Liberals of the nineteenth century proclaimed a jihad against all forms of government interference in the realm of commerce.

The gospel they preached was that trade should be left to regulate itself, free from the trammels of political interference. So left, it was claimed, trade was self-regulating. All that was inefficient or undesirable would die and wither in the struggle for existence imposed by competition. That which was more efficient and productive would be sought out and developed by the consumers' demand, unless political interference was placed in its way. Vain to seek to protect the inefficient by tariff or subsidy. The only effect was to give the public a less satisfactory product at a higher price than would be obtained by buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market. The laws of supply and demand were far more just and infinitely wiser than the most cunningly contrived regulations of potentates or their ministers.

Who, the Liberals enquired, can foresee the course of industry

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

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or science? Restriction will only hamper the pioneer and make desirable changes the less easy, and in the end more violent. In the long run the public interest is best served by each pursuing his own. Since each act of commerce originates and ends in a free bargain, the outcome will faithfully reflect the desires and needs of the whole population. The consumer, and no legislator, is the best judge of what he wants, and at least as able a judge of what is good for him.

No fear need be expressed, the Liberal contended, lest under such a system the good things of this world will be unevenly distributed. Inequalities have marked the entire course of human history, but once abolish privilege and caste, and these will tend to disappear. Moreover, it is right that the devisers and creators of new wealth should receive new wealth for their pains. What matters is the size of the cake and not the exact proportions in which it is divided. In a constantly expanding economy large profits will be accompanied by rising wages and all will be free to share in the general prosperity.

Important political advantages were claimed to result from the new policy. Freedom of trade and the abolition of privilege would open the way for democracy and curb the power of would-be tyrants. After all, money, to a large extent, is power, and the new system would put a great proportion of money in the hands of private individuals than had ever before existed outside the treasury of an Emperor. To quote Professor Hayek¹:

The contrast between a liberal and a totally planned system is characteristically illustrated by the common complaints of Nazis and Socialists of the artificial separation of economics and politics and their equally common demand for the dominance of politics over economics. These phrases presumably mean not only that economic forces are now allowed to work for ends which are not part of the policy of the government but also that economic power can be used independently of government direction and for ends of which the government may not approve.

The benefits of Liberalism, by which was meant free trade and *laissez faire*, were not to be limited to the prosperity and freedom of nations. Was it not notorious that wars were caused by

1. *The Road to Serfdom*. London (Routledge) 1944, p. 81.

the ambitions and fears of governments possessed of privilege and enjoying almost a monopoly of power, economic or political? Such mishaps would become impossible in the nineteenth century, and as trade barriers were removed and the old military aristocracies overthrown, Liberals might look forward to a golden century of peace. Armies and navies might be abolished, and mankind settle down to a new era, in which trading competition would spur them ever onward to new and ever new achievements in the production of useful wealth.

Such was the gospel preached by the new mercantile class. The Conservatives, as always out of date, did not quite believe them. They did not concede that the curse of Adam was so easily removed by Adam Smith. The Liberal doctrine was really only an application of Oscar Wilde's epigram that the only way to overcome temptation was to yield to it. If full rein were granted to avarice, provided only it did not overstep the bounds of criminal law, Liberals believed that all would be well with a nation, since the avarice of each would add up together to make the prosperity of all. Conservatives thought that this was all too callow a theory for credence and protested in the name of the traditional wisdom of the race. Of course this was a most reactionary and pig-headed thing to do.

They could not stand up against the spirit of the age. The omens were against them. For the truth of the matter was that Liberalism was very nearly true. At all events it was made to appear that Conservatives, in venturing to condemn the prevailing doctrine, were merely Blimps set on putting the clock back, and that their just reward would be political annihilation amid the scorn and derision of a progressive and thoughtful age.

However, there was a young man writing who could condemn the whole system as roundly as if he had been Mr Aneurin Bevan, although happily he had a better sense of style. His name was Benjamin Disraeli, and he was a Tory.

This is how he wrote of the capitalism which, as he saw it, was the distinguishing mark of the Whig and Liberal connexion:

Since the passing of the Reform Act the altar of Mammon has blazed with triple worship. To acquire, to accumulate, to plunder each other by virtue of philosophic phrases, to propose a Utopia to

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consist only of wealth and toil, this has been the breathless business of an enfranchised England, until we are startled from our voracious strife by the wail of intolerable serfage.¹

It was the Tory Party which took its stand in the nineteenth century against the principles of *laissez faire* Liberalism, of which it is now accused by its more ignorant opponents of being the sole inventor and patentee. More still, it did so on what would now be considered the orthodox Socialist ground that capitalism was an ungodly and rapacious scramble for ill-gotten gains, in the course of which the richer appeared to get richer and the poor poorer. The 'wail of intolerable serfage' of which Disraeli wrote in the forties of the nineteenth century consisted in the conditions of factory labour to which *laissez faire* had driven the workers, the condition of semi-starvation thrust upon the old craftsmen by the introduction of the new machines, and the absence of any supervision by the executive Government over the operations of the system which brought about these results. For the remedy proposed by Disraeli, embroidered in exotic and paradoxical language, and therefore ridiculed and flouted at the time, was as entirely up to date as his analysis of the disease. The privileges of the multitude could only be safeguarded by an increase of the executive power of government which then, as now, is legally expressed in the prerogative of the Crown.

'In the selfish strife of factions', he wrote, 'two great existences have been blotted out of the history of England, the Monarch and the Multitude; as the power of the Crown has diminished, the privileges of the people have disappeared; till at length the sceptre has become a pageant, and its subject has degenerated again into a serf.'²

To quote again from Lord Hugh Cecil³:

In the nineteenth century, when Liberalism enforced to the utmost the principle of personal liberty, it was among Conservatives that the authority and control of the State was defended, and, in some instances, enlarged and strengthened.

1. *Sybil*. London (Bodley Head) 1905, p. 46.

2. *ibid.*, p. 641.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 170.

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Instances of such enlargements may be given in the devoted and self-sacrificing work of the Tory Shaftesbury to pass the Factory Acts, a work which paralleled the earlier work of the Tory Wilberforce to control and abolish slavery.

It so happened that the despised and derided Tories, the enemies of the people, the friends of privilege, the stupid party, the party of self-interest and greed, the party that has opposed every progressive-minded prospectus of reform, had hit on the right criticism and propounded the right remedy. Odd? Or perhaps not quite so odd.

What may, more legitimately, be thought odd is that, having taken this stand, Conservatives should now very largely be engaged in fighting the battle of Liberalism against the Socialists who attack *laissez faire* from almost exactly the same angle as the Conservatives in 1848. Surely this is inconsistent? Another proof of Tory hypocrisy? Or is it that this peculiar party thrives on fighting losing battles? It is, one assumes, quite beyond the bounds of possibility that these guilty men should actually turn out to be right again. Or is it? A strange Greek proverb contained the warning 'μηδὲν ἄγαν' – which being interpreted means 'avoid extremes'. Conservatives think that the doctrinaire application of a political theory inevitably involves the statesman in extremes. In fighting Socialism in the twentieth, as they fought Liberalism in the nineteenth century, Conservatives will be found to have changed their front to meet a new danger, but not the ground they are defending.

9. THE SOCIALIST HERESY

AT the same time as Disraeli was teaching us to discipline the Liberal Mammon with the traditions of an older society, a new and even more disagreeable heresy was being hatched in the gloom of the British Museum Library.

In a foreword to a centenary edition of the Communist Manifesto some years ago, the Labour Party acknowledged 'its indebtedness to Marx and Engels as two of the men who have been the inspiration of the whole working-class movement'. But Marx, though beyond question a genius, was able to see no further than his nose. What he failed to apprehend was that the meticulous collection and publication by the authorities of the damning material which he read and later used in *Das Kapital*, was itself part of the slow growth of a social conscience in England. The resulting measure of justice and humanity proved to be true enlightenment. An educated, healthy, and secure population enjoying a wide distribution of the good things of life proved to be an even more fertile soil for initiative and enterprise than the poverty-stricken and disease-ridden medieval communities from which it sprang. The dynamic of Capitalism's development was not a Marxian dialectic, but a Darwinian evolution, and the poor became richer as the result of its ascendancy, as well as the rich.

Even Mr C. A. R. Crosland, in his optimistically titled book *The Future of Socialism*, has to admit that 'Marx's prophecies have been almost without exception falsified, and his conceptual tools are now quite inappropriate.' The fantastic growth of the economy, the spectacular rise in the standard of living, the substantial redistribution of wealth, the generous development of social welfare, and the admitted humanizing of private industry, have rendered obsolete the whole intellectual framework within which Socialist discussion used to be conducted. Yet the remedies which Socialist politicians continue to propound are those which arise from a Marxian analysis of society. Nationaliza-

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tion, planning and controls, and the equalizing of material conditions, while they may be sipped without great harm, are poisonous potions prescribed for a disease from which the patient is no longer suffering, and capable if taken in large doses of killing him outright.

It is not hard to demonstrate that these nostrums, taken to their logical conclusions, are incompatible with the survival of liberty. Take nationalization for a start. With the State as the sole industrialist, the sole merchant, and the sole banker, we should have to spend what the State decreed we should spend on the goods and services which the State decided to provide for us. Then there is planning. The State could maintain an effective system of distributive justice of its own choosing only by controlling the whole of economic activity. Restrictions could not be confined to the activities of the relatively rich; every wage claim would require official sanction; every change of job would have to be regulated by the bureaucracy; every strike would be illegal. Finally, there is the Socialist goal of equality. Since in every civilized society there is necessarily a powerful and continuous drive away from uniformity, I do not see how it could be imposed save by a gigantic exercise of inflexible authority, or maintained unless authority stood guard over it with unsleeping vigilance. All forms of power would be centralized in the Government, and the interference of the State would pervade and dominate the private life of the citizen.

Of course, it is unnecessary to say that democratic Socialists would not allow themselves to go all of the way along these roads. If they did they would cease to be democratic. But the inescapable truth is that unless they do go all of the way, their Socialism simply does not work. The nationalization of all the means of production, distribution, and exchange, a fully controlled economy, and the equalization of most human material conditions – these might in logic be made to work. They certainly appear to have worked in a sense in Soviet Russia, whose society has of late, measured simply by material standards, been at least as dynamic and expansive as that of some capitalist countries.

The carrot works, and the stick works; what does not work is

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the democratic Socialist system. Under this you do not nationalize all industries, but only some, involving yourself as a result in practically insoluble problems of control and accountability, while holding a threat over others which causes recurrent dislocation and uncertainty. You do not completely control the economy, but apply controls unilaterally, to capital because you dare, but not to labour because you daren't: thus ensuring a wage-push inflation which the ordinary market mechanisms are not available either to correct or even to temper. You do not exactly equalize human conditions, but only confiscate the fruits of productive talent with penal taxation and dole out subsidies regardless of need; so securing that exertion and thrift bring no extra reward, and removing both the stimulus which counters laziness and the hope which checks prodigality.

It has been well said that such an ambivalent, democratic Socialist State becomes like a dog in a manger, or rather like a dog in a poultry yard. It cannot itself lay eggs, and it will not allow the hens to do so.

The truth as I see it is that Socialism is the name given to a series of quite inconsistent reactions shown by a past generation to the over-statement of extreme individualism current in the nineteenth-century Liberal tradition. It is unintelligible except as a protest against Liberal theory.

The Conservative theory of government is at variance alike with the Liberalism of the nineteenth and the Socialism of the twentieth century. In brief it comes to this. While Conservatives recognize that popular election based on adult suffrage is the best method – where it is practicable – of selecting who the Government should be, and that Parliamentary institutions – where these can be worked – the best method of ensuring that government is by discussion and not by force, Conservatives believe that the real limitations on government and policy do not depend at all upon the title of the Government to rule, but upon the nature of government itself, and are ultimately the same for elective and Parliamentary authorities as for usurpers and absolute monarchs.

The Liberals at first recognized this fact, and, as we shall see in the following chapter, endeavoured to supply the principle –

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individual liberty – upon which Governments should act. For reasons which will be made apparent this principle fails. Conservatives think it fails because Liberals were afraid to anchor their theory of government upon the moral precepts of the natural law, and sought instead something more objective which would be more universally recognized.

Conservatives regard the prerogatives of government as going far beyond anything approved by the classical Liberal theorists, but in other directions their theory of government is even more limited. They hold there is no sphere which at times Government may not penetrate in the name of the natural law. There is no relationship, economic, social, even domestic, where legislation may not in some circumstances be appropriate to check, or even to prevent, abuses. But Conservatives teach that these acts of interference, however all-pervasive, never become a substitute for freedom. On the contrary, where they occur, they are always brakes on progress, and wherever they impose directions on individual conduct which do not involve a duty otherwise arising, or which are not strictly necessary to preserve order (like the rule of the road), such enactments are bad for the reason that all slavery is bad, that they subject the human personality to the will of others, when it should be free even to make its own mistakes for itself.

Conservatives are not, therefore, always impressed by phrases popular at the moment. Liberalism was excessively popular in the nineteenth century, but Conservatives wisely observed that the real danger of that century was not too little liberty, but too much. Socialism was excessively popular until recently, but Conservatives think, and have now been proved right, that the real danger of our times is not too little authority, but too much.

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FOR the better part of a hundred years now the tide has been flowing against the doctrine of *laissez faire*. Quite early on it was found necessary to regulate conditions in factories by prescribing safety precautions, prohibiting female and infant labour, limiting hours, and latterly by fixing minimum rates of pay. This represents only part of what has actually been done. Since 1896 employers have had to become insurers of their workmen against industrial injury in respect of part of the risk. Since 1911 a compulsory levy on employers has paid part of the contribution to National Health Insurance; in 1925 the contributory scheme was extended to cover old age pensions, and now the employer as such pays a share of the entire Social Insurance scheme, in addition to what he pays in taxation.

In part these modifications are accepted by individualists. For instance, in *The Road to Serfdom*, Professor Hayek argues that provided certain restrictions 'affect all potential producers equally and are not used as an indirect way of controlling prices and quantities Liberal principle is not necessarily infringed'. But this is really to recede from the historical Liberal position. The true disciple of Adam Smith inevitably points out, first, that no such restrictions are identical in all countries, and that all must therefore hamper to some extent production here, and, second, that, according to the best Liberal view, even were this not so, restrictions of this kind are unnecessary if it is economically practicable to incur the higher costs, since labour would be attracted to employers who incurred them, and undesirable if it is not so practicable, since restrictions of this kind would cause unemployment. The truth is that the whole world has moved far from Liberal economic orthodoxy and no one can seriously hope to restore it.

The Socialist argument, however, consists in asserting that the only alternative offered to *laissez faire* is Socialist planning.

To this the Conservative replies, first, that this is not true; there are other possibilities, and several of them; and secondly, that if it were true he would probably prefer *laissez faire*. He has never believed in *laissez faire*. He detests the 'wail of intolerable serfage' which it produced. He will not accept that he has to choose between totalitarianism and two million unemployed. But, if that were the choice, he would not sacrifice freedom for totalitarianism, and he considers that the ultimate implications of modern Socialist theory are not really very far removed from totalitarianism.

Conservatives, therefore, regard themselves in the twentieth century as the true champions of liberty, and, faithful to their traditional rôle of absorbing what was good in the past theories of their opponents, believe that there was a great deal more truth in Liberalism than it is now fashionable to admit.

'Power tends to corrupt,' said the Liberal Lord Acton, 'and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' What was true in Liberalism was primarily this political theory. Much that was written about Liberalism by Liberals was ephemeral and wrong. But Acton truly said of liberty that it 'is not a means to a higher political end. It is in itself the highest political end. It is not for the sake of a good public administration that it is required, but for the security in the pursuit of the highest objects of civil society and of private life.'

Now political liberty is something which evades precise metaphysical definition. Not the most careful constitutional declarations of human rights have protected it on the Continent. Not the most excellent legal safeguards can make it safe here.

The philosophers and the historians can give what account of political liberty they please. Sir Winston Churchill applied a variety of practical tests in addressing an Italian audience shortly after the fall of Mussolini.¹

It has been said that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance. The question arises, 'What is freedom?' There are one or two quite simple practical tests by which it can be known in the modern world in peace conditions, namely:— Is there the right to free expression of opinion and of opposition and criticism of the day? Have the people

1. Message to Italian people, 28 August 1944.

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the right to turn out a Government of which they disapprove, and are constitutional means provided by which they can make their will apparent? Are their courts of justice free from violence by the Executive and free of threats of mob violence and all association with any particular political parties? Will these courts administer open and well-established laws associated in the human mind with the broad principles of decency and justice? Will there be fair play for poor as well as for rich, for private persons as well as Government officials? Will the rights of the individual, subject to his duties to the state, be maintained, asserted, and exalted? Is the ordinary peasant or workman earning a living by daily toil and striving to bring up a family free from the fear that some grim police organization under the control of a single party, like the Gestapo, started by the Nazi and Fascist parties, will tap him on the shoulder and pack him off without fair or open trial to bondage or ill-treatment? These simple practical tests are some of the title-deeds on which a new Italy could be founded.

But the Conservative, required to define freedom, will be tempted to apply a simpler and overriding criterion.

Political liberty is nothing else but the diffusion of power. All power tends to corrupt, absolute power to corrupt absolutely. It follows that political liberty is impossible to the extent that power is concentrated in the hands of a few men. It does not matter whether these be popularly elected or no. Give men power and they will misuse it. Give them absolute power, that is, concentrate in their hands all the various kinds and degrees of power, and they will abuse it absolutely. If power is not to be abused it must be spread as widely as possible throughout the community.

Thus, although Conservatives have always supported a strong central authority when the danger to order has consisted in too much decentralization, to-day they believe that it would be an evil day for Britain, and for freedom, if all power fell into the hands of the Cabinet. For since political liberty is nothing else than the diffusion of power, the splitting up of political and legal power into different parcels is the essential means of securing it.

Conservatives see no inconsistency in having opposed Liberals and Whigs in the name of authority, Socialists in the name of

freedom. The ground is the same, but it is being attacked from a different direction. The great heresy of the nineteenth century was self-interest. But to-day the boot is on the other foot. When the predominant left-wing philosophy was Liberalism, the danger was too much liberty – in the political sphere creating chaos, in the economic sphere producing alternate boom and slump, and creating mass unemployment.

But to-day the predominant theory of the left is Socialism, and the danger is not too much but too little freedom. The great heresy of our age is no longer self-interest, it is State worship, and instead of the altars being ablaze in honour of Mammon, we make our children pass through the fire to Moloch.

In each fight Conservatives have taken the same stand. Abused and traduced as reactionaries and out of touch with the times, they opposed the excessive individualism of the Liberals in the name of the same principle as that in defence of which they now oppose Socialism – the Rule of Law, the enemy alike of dictatorship and anarchy, the friend by whose good offices authority and liberty can alone be reconciled.

There are some who tend to deny the value of freedom. What is freedom, they ask, under Capitalism but freedom to starve? It is not enough to enjoy a political democracy; it is necessary to have an economic democracy as well.

In a sense, these critics are right.

But what is meant by economic freedom or economic democracy? Conservatives are tempted to reply in a single sentence.

Just as political democracy and political freedom mean the diffusion, the sharing of political power, so economic democracy, economic freedom, means the sharing, the diffusion, of economic power, that is property, as widely as possible throughout the community. This diffusion Conservatives regard as the very antithesis of Socialism.

Conservatives therefore wish to see economic democracy, but they can find no meaning in the phrase unless it implies the sharing of property as widely as possible. Economic democracy is, and is nothing else than, the 'property-owning democracy' called for by Sir Anthony Eden. Such a property-owning demo-

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cracy, although it is inconsistent with the coexistence of great wealth coupled with great poverty, is not inconsistent with the existence of large independent fortunes held either by great Corporations or by individuals. Such independent fortunes, properly controlled by law, form, in our view, a valuable, indeed an indispensable, counterpoise to the vast complex of economic power controlled by the modern state.

Conservatives therefore consider it an essential part of economic democracy to see wealth shared as widely as possible by individuals. They desire to see wealth also shared by groups. They rejoice to see it shared by great trade unions so long as these are neither subservient to the interests of a single political party nor ambitious to control the political machinery of the state. Conservatives also wish property to be shared by traders and trading companies and by local authorities. But, above all, they want to see property in the family, and the family itself an independent centre of power enjoying its own franchises and prerogatives and occupying its true position as the foundation of civilized society.

In all this Conservatives find an unanswerable case against Socialism, under which name they include all forms of State worship, in all the forms in which it has been present, Leninist, Marxist, Fascist, or Transport House (and each of these can by this test be regarded as Socialist, though not all are equally evil). Socialism aims at the concentration of power, political and economic, in the hands of a few political chiefs. The arguments for it are the arguments which have been used for dictatorship from time immemorial – efficiency, national crisis, the protection of the multitude of ‘common men’ against the power of the wealthy or influential, the efficient redistribution of wealth or the like.

The Socialist is not content with control. He must have ownership. That is to say, he is not satisfied with preventing wrongful action by the owners of industry; he demands to use industry as he desires himself in despite of those from whom he proposes to take it by force, and notwithstanding that their own use of it may be proved to be legitimate.

The case against this form of society was clearly stated by

John Stuart Mill in unanswerable language more than a hundred years ago.¹

Every function superadded to those already exercised by the Government causes its influence over hopes and fears to be more widely diffused, and converts more and more the active and ambitious part of the public into hangers on of the Government, or of some party which aims at becoming the Government. If the roads, the railways, the banks, the insurance offices, the great joint stock companies, the universities, and the public charities were all of them branches of the Government: if in addition the municipal corporations and local boards, with all that now devolves on them, became departments of the central administration: if the employees of all these different enterprises were appointed and paid by the Government, and looked to the Government for every rise in life; not all the freedom of the press and popular constitution of the legislature would make this or any other country free otherwise than in name.

If every part of the business of Society which required organized concert or large and comprehensive views were in the hands of the Government, and if government offices were universally filled by the ablest men, all the enlarged culture and practical intelligence in the country, except the purely speculative, would be concentrated in a numerous bureaucracy to whom alone the rest of the community would look for all things: – the multitude for direction and dictation in all they had to do, the able and aspiring for personal advancement. To be admitted into the ranks of this bureaucracy and, when admitted, to rise therein would be the sole objects of ambition. Under this régime, not only is the outside public ill qualified for want of practical experience to criticize or check the mode of operation of the bureaucracy, but even if the accidents of despots, or the natural working of popular institutions occasionally raise to the summit a ruler or rulers of reforming inclinations no reform can be effected which is contrary to the interest of the bureaucracy.

It is also not to be forgotten that the absorption of all the principal ability of the country into the governing body is fatal sooner or later to the mental activity and progressiveness of the body itself. Banded together as they are, working a system which like all systems necessarily proceeds in a great measure by fixed rules, the official body are under the constant temptation of sinking into indolent routine, or if they now and again desert that mill-horse round, of rushing into

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some half-examined crudity which has struck the fancy of some leading member of the corps; and the sole check to those allied though seemingly opposite tendencies . . . is liability to the watchful criticizing of equal ability outside the body.

Conservatives accept this classical Liberal criticism of Socialism, and although they are not at all insensitive to the evils which Socialism claims to cure, Conservatives regard Socialism as a remedy which is even more dangerous than the disease.

According to the view of Conservatives, the evils which John Stuart Mill so graphically, and prophetically, condemned are an epitome of the aims and objects of the present Labour Party.

As Conservatives see it, the whole outlook and philosophy of the Labour Movement can be summed up in the single phrase 'Concentration of Power'. No one pretends that the distribution of power is, or ever has been, perfect. It may be, or rather of course it is, the duty of men of good will to subject this distribution to continuous improvement.

But Conservatives believe that the deliberate policy of concentrating more and yet more power in the hands of the executive is to jump from the frying-pan into the fire.

And yet, as we see it, there never has been a moment in the history of Britain, save for the brief periods when a Cromwell or a Henry VIII held all the power of Church and State in the hollow of his hands, when so much power in this island has been concentrated in a single group as was concentrated in the hands of the Labour Government in the years immediately after the war.

The exceptional emergency powers which throughout the war were renewed year by year were seized by the Socialists for five years at a stretch. State trading and the nationalization of major industries placed enormous power and patronage in the hands of the Government. Nor was it only private enterprise that was eroded. The municipal gas and electricity undertakings were taken over by vast corporations erected by the State, and the municipal hospitals were nationalized. The Friendly Societies were assaulted because they stood in the way of the symmetry of the health service. The doctors were pilloried; the builders were bullied; labour was directed; and the householder

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was subjected to the invasion of six thousand snoopers. As fifteen thousand orders and regulations poured out from the Ministries in six years, there was no one who was left immune from the gradual encroachment of power; and Englishmen began to question whether it was for this that they had fought and so many had died.

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So far we have emphasized the infinite variety and richness of the forms of life and organization which healthy society should develop, and the natures or individualities which vigorous nations should possess. If, however, there were no limits to these, our philosophy would, at bottom, be no better than do-as-you-please, and do-as-you-please is always another name either for tyranny or anarchy.

One of the apostles of classical Liberalism, John Stuart Mill, regarded the struggle between liberty and authority as one of the main themes of constitutional history.

'The struggle', he wrote, 'between Liberty and Authority is the most conspicuous feature in the portions of history with which we are earliest familiar, particularly in that of Greece, Rome, and England.'

Undoubtedly there is a real sense in which this analysis is true, indeed these two principles have contended for mastery ever since man dwelt in more or less organized communities. But modern Conservatives find the solution of this eternal tension in a conception which they know as the rule of law. This is why they recognize no inconsistency between their past rôle as the party of authority and their present rôle as the champions of liberty.

This regard for law as something itself deserving of respect by ruler and subject alike is something which marks out Conservative thought both from the old-time Liberal and the new Socialist. Conservatives regard the rule of law as the formula which alone can reconcile freedom and order in the same society, and the solution at the present day of the so-called conflict between the interests of the individual and those of the society in which he lives. It is also the only formula which in the near future offers any prospect of peace.

In the past this belief in law brought Conservatives into

conflict with Liberals, who seemed to think that the selfish interest of the individual was a principle which could be trusted to work out for the benefit of society as a whole without the authority and curb of law.

And so, Disraeli wrote with splendid exaggeration, the Altars of Mammon blazed with triple worship, until the wail of an intolerable serfage brought it to understanding that authority had degenerated into a pageant and a people was in danger of relapsing into a more than medieval servitude.

But that was the struggle of the nineteenth century, and, as we have seen, Conservatives regard the heresy of to-day not so much as self-interest but state worship and seek to oppose the authoritarian heresy of Socialism in the name of the same principle that animated their forefathers in their resistance to the Liberal worship of Mammon.

For the rule of law resists uncontrolled liberty because liberty uncontrolled is the mother of chaos – physical chaos if the spectre of physical order, economic chaos if the principle of *laissez faire* is consistently applied. But just as Conservatives believe that the freedom of the individual is subject to law, so also subject to that rule must be the power of the state and the discretion of Ministers to fetter the freedom of the individual.

The rule of law is as much opposed to regulation and dictatorship as it is to licence or anarchy. What ought to control the individual is not the whim of another individual or group of individuals, even if these are for the moment in legitimate enjoyment of all the panoply and prestige of official office. What ought to control the individual is law – duly passed, first adequately discussed, impartially applied by an independent judiciary, efficiently executed, and even then it ought to prohibit the individual from doing what is wrong and not the power and right to do good. The social conscience expressing itself through Parliament, and not a Socialist Government expressing itself in directions from individual Ministers and Government Offices, is the true vehicle and expression of the rule of law.

In this, Conservatives are only defending the traditional Constitution of this country, older than Socialism, older than Liberalism, its roots deep in the Christian tradition of the past.

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Conservatives believe in variety and liberty of development under the rule of law. Law they regard as something neither the enemy of liberty nor of authority, but reconciling both. Law is the means of robbing liberty of its anarchic tendencies, and removing from authority the elements of caprice. Law must be public, law must be of general application, law must be reasonable, law must be constitutionally enacted after open discussion, impartially administered, uncorruptly enforced. Given these characteristics there is no conflict between liberty and authority. Authority is simply the name we give to the organs of government entrusted with the duty of protecting the rights and liberties of all accorded by law from the caprices or whims of each, and liberty the rights and powers that each expects will be respected and accorded by all in return for a similar forbearance from himself. Law is the name we give to the liberties of others which we must respect if we expect to receive the like ourselves.

If this be true, law is not something which can be made or unmade at will according to the whim of a sovereign body. If it were, it would cease to be the reasonable principle reconciling authority and liberty and become instead the whim of a tyrant.

This means that the popular view, according to which Parliament, controlled by its temporary majority, is entitled to do exactly what that majority desires, is just as immoral, every bit as tyrannical, as the corresponding doctrine of Hitlerite Germany. *Das ist Recht was dem Führer gefällt*. Whatever the formal legal position, the doctrine of mandate, no less than the *Führer Prinzip*, has its distinct and definite limitations.

To our own age the doctrine that there are limits to what a sovereign majority may do, may seem paradoxical. It is as well to remember that to most others it would appear to be the merest truism.

In other words, most societies regard law as something which of its very nature cannot be changed at all.

'Nothing,' says Maine,¹ 'is more remarkable than the extreme fewness of progressive societies. It is indisputable that much the greatest part of mankind has never shown a particle of desire that its civil institutions should be improved since the moment when external

1. *Ancient Law*.

completeness was first given them by their embodiment in some permanent record.'

This was for a long time the view held by English lawyers, and it was precisely this view, that law, as distinct from what we should now describe as 'emergency legislation', was of its nature unalterable, that used to be one of the great safeguards of English liberty. Each sovereign, when he came to the throne, swore to respect the customs and Charters of the Confessor. In doing so he precluded himself from bringing in new statutes to alter the law and custom of the realm. Statutes could in fact only be passed by a Parliament, that is to say by a solemn compact between the King and his subjects, and the last thing which Parliaments then contemplated was the constant, restless, and apparently limitless alteration of the rules of the Common Law. Indeed

the aim of patriots was to set a limit to the power which the ruler should be suffered to exercise over the community, and this limitation was what they meant by liberty. It was attempted in two ways – first, by obtaining a recognition of certain immunities, called political liberties or rights, which it was to be regarded as a breach of duty in the ruler to infringe. . . . A second, and generally a later, expedient was the establishment of constitutional checks, by which the consent of the community or of a body of some sort supposed to represent its interests, was made a necessary condition to some of the more important acts of governing power.¹

As Mill observes, the difficulty arises at the point when self-government takes the place of authoritarian rule.

In political and philosophical theories, as well as in persons, success discloses faults and infirmities which failure might have concealed from observation. The notion that the people had no need to limit their power over themselves, might seem axiomatic when popular government was a thing only dreamed about or read of as having existed at some distant period of the past. Neither was the notion necessarily disturbed by such temporary aberrations as those of the French Revolution, the worst of which were the work of a usurping few, and which in any case belonged not to the permanent working of popular institutions but to a sudden and convulsive out-

1. Mill, *Essay on Liberty*, chapter 1.

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break against monarchical and aristocratic despotism. In time, however, a democratic republic came to occupy a large portion of the earth's surface, and made itself felt as one of the most powerful members of the community of nations; and elective and responsible government became subject to the observations and criticisms which wait upon a great existing fact. It was now perceived that such phrases as 'self government', and 'the power of the people over themselves' do not express the true state of the case. The 'people' who exercise the power are not always the same people as those over whom it is exercised, and the 'self government' spoken of is not the government of each by himself, but of each by all the rest. The will of the people, moreover, practically means the will of the most numerous, or the most active *part* of the people, the majority, or those who succeed in making themselves accepted as the majority. The people, consequently, may desire to oppress a part of their number and precautions are as much needed against this as against any other abuse of power.

In these words, as fresh as when they were written, Mill poses the question to which Conservatives claim they have an answer. What are the limits which self-governing communities may set themselves in exercising authority over their members?

Unhappily Mill's own answer, the Liberal answer, was as unhelpful and superficial as this statement of the problem was luminous and profound. To Mill, and to the orthodox Liberals generally, the answer was that the 'sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually, or collectively, in interfering in the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will, is to prevent harm to others.' The Liberals, and Mill, then went on to deduce from this supposed principle the entire armoury of Liberal liberties, freedom of the press, of trade, freedom of private property, liberty of worship, and the like. They failed to realize that not one of the tyrannies ever exercised by a majority over a minority, from the prohibition of alcoholic liquor to Hitler's persecution of the Jews, was not to be defended as a supposed application of this principle. So an orthodox Socialist would defend his measures of confiscation on exactly the same principle - self-protection of the majority - which the Liberal

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would contend guaranteed the sanctity and inviolability of private property. The truth is that, in establishing a test which they believed would guarantee the individual the maximum of liberty, they sold the pass into the hand of the tyrant. Nobody inflicts cruelty except on the pretence, however flimsy, that he is compelled to do so in self-defence, and a principle which will allow the Liberal to argue the inviolability of private property and the Socialist its abolition is not one of great practical assistance in the ordinary affairs of life.

Conservatives believe that the answer to this much-debated issue is simple and is the same for democracies as for other governments. A sovereign body, prince, Parliament, or people, may be legally entitled to legislate as it pleases. Morally and politically there is a limit to what it may do. The limit is set by a body of doctrine which we may call the natural law, which is the same for all sovereign bodies, and limits the number of claims upon the individual which the group may make.

To some partisans of the left, democracy means no more than a tyranny based on the counting of heads. Where fifty-one are opposed to forty-nine the fifty-one must always have it, however arbitrary or unjust their view.

The Conservative regards this doctrine as the reverse of justice and even the reverse of democracy. He is apt to judge the democratic quality of a country's government not by the extent to which government is by majority (even a two-thirds majority) but by the liberties and tolerance allowed to minorities not happening to conform to the general social pattern but otherwise useful and law-abiding citizens.

As regards forms and persons, he concedes the rights of the majority or even (as in Britain) of the largest organized minority to govern. But he denies the right of any Government, however legitimate, to govern arbitrarily or unjustly.

The limitations on government are founded on the natural law and, whatever the form of government may be, are the same. You do not alter the characteristics or conditions of sovereignty by changing either the names or the number of the people who are to be sovereign. To the Conservative no government is entitled to absolute power. No man, no group of men, no class

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of men, no aristocracy of men, no anonymous majority of common men has the right to override the fundamental decencies of life, and if they attempt to do so, while they will certainly bring untold misery on others, they will not fail to involve themselves and their country in irretrievable ruin.

To the Conservative, therefore, the essence of democracy is not bare majority rule; the right to reform the law may be legally, and in certain directions morally and politically, unlimited in scope, but here and there a wall is fixed beyond which it is not lawful to go. On the wall are inscribed the words 'Natural Law', and if rulers overleap it even majority rule becomes the tyranny of a mob, the more irresponsible because it is anonymous.

What then is the natural law? Is there such a thing at all? And what do Conservatives claim to be its main precepts?

It is often objected that people in different parts of the world differ as to what is right and wrong. This of course is a true, but hardly an original, observation. Some two thousand five hundred years ago Herodotus observed that a Greek would regard nothing as more wrong than that he should eat his dead father's body, while certain tribes of Indians regarded the same thing as their most sacred duty.

It is perhaps only a debating point to retort, as did a recent author, that the Greek and the Indian did not differ on moral, but only on scientific theory; the Indian believed that by eating his dead father's body he was conferring immortality on his spirit, the Greek that he was defiling his memory. If the Indian's premises had been true, his conclusion would have followed.

It is possibly fairer to reply frankly that there is absolute agreement about nothing in this world and that men of different times and places differ in their fundamental moral judgements no less than in other matters.

But this objection, if it is serious at all, fails as an argument because it proves too much. There is no branch of study upon which men do not differ – but in morals and politics there is a much greater measure of agreement upon fundamentals by the instructed minority than in most other topics, let us say than in economics or psychology.

THE RULE OF LAW

In a lecture to Durham University Professor C. S. Lewis actually drew up a series of examples of what he claimed to be precepts of the natural law from sources as different as Socrates, Buddha, Lao Tse, Moses, Christ, Plato, Muhammad and the Books of Ancient Egypt. It is certain that of the seven commandments which deal more or less directly with our duty towards our neighbour there is probably not one which would not have been subscribed to by any of these authorities or by, let us say, the two modern statesmen who subscribed the Articles of the Atlantic Charter. There is, in short, no doubt about the existence of a natural law among those best qualified to judge, and if there is conflict as well as agreement this must be true of any branch of study - particularly of such studies as develop only as the result of pioneers pushing along the same trail and progressively driving it further and further into the wilderness of ignorance and savagery. The natural law is the basis of all actual law; where actual law is not in conformity with the best which is known of it, it loses its moral authority.

At present it is only necessary to quote one precept of the natural law the disregard of which has caused much of the misery of our time.

'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' The fundamental thesis on which all societies should pass laws is respect for human personality. In dealing with human beings, the means *never* justifies the end because each human soul is an ultimate in itself. The brotherhood of man is thus the basis of natural law, at once the basis and the justification of all actual law in Britain or elsewhere. This is the foundation of Conservative political doctrine, and the limitation which restricts all temporal sovereignty.

Nevertheless the rule of law to which Conservatives pay respect is as real and solid as the table in the House of Commons. It is no metaphysical conception of natural law, no philosophers' abstraction like the laws of Plato's Republic. It is a body of actual law, imperfect as all actual things must be, but none the less sufficiently embodying the eternal principles to command and exact respect as such. To quote the resplendent

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phrase read out as part of the Queen's Commission at each assize, it is 'the law and custom of England'.

The rule of law, then, means a great deal more than a study of the natural law could ever tell us.

The first fundamental principle of the rule of law is that a man can only be punished for doing something already against a public law duly passed at the time it was done, after adequate discussion, and the punishment applied by the judgement of an impartial court properly set up after a public hearing of the case, and executed by public officers duly appointed for the purpose.

This first principle has been frequently violated in the strains and stresses of the twentieth century, and there are very many people who would like to see these violations continue. Thus the principle that you could only be punished for breaking the law was violated during the war for reasons of national security. People were locked up under regulation 18B not for what they had done, or even what they had said, but for what they were, what they believed, or what people thought they might do in certain circumstances. Conservatives believe that liberty would perish if such powers were operated in time of peace, or even during a war where no reason existed for their retention. Thus they applauded Mr Herbert Morrison for releasing Sir Oswald Mosley; this was not because they felt the smallest sympathy for Sir Oswald Mosley or his opinions; they merely maintained that he had not been convicted of any breach of the law, and that it was therefore necessary to release him so soon as the war situation made it reasonably prudent to do so. Many people objected to the release of Sir Oswald Mosley because, they alleged, he was a person who held detestable opinions, was a Fascist, and therefore a bad and hateful man. Conservatives maintain that this is no reason for imprisoning a man, unless he can be proved guilty and convicted of a crime, and sentenced by a judge.

The rule of law does not preach that you are free to do as you please. It does not even teach that you are free to express all the opinions you please. You will soon find this out if you use foul language in the street or publish a libellous letter. What the rule of law says is that no one can claim to see your letter

before you publish it, that no one can presume to say that people may only publish what they please with a licence from the Government. There is no censorship under the rule of law. People are free to publish what they please, and if what they publish turns out to be a breach of the law, they can be punished or made to pay damages accordingly – but only when they have been convicted by an impartial court.

Such Courts need not be, although normally they should be, the ordinary Courts of law. What is essential is that they be independent of the Government, impartial, that they should hold their sittings in public, and give published reasons for their decisions.

These principles of 'openness, fairness, and impartiality' were applied more completely to the procedures governing administrative tribunals and inquiries as a result of the 1957 Franks Report; and Conservatives are proud to recall that the establishment of the Franks Committee itself stems from the report of a group of independent Conservative lawyers.¹

The second fundamental principle of the rule of law is that all, even the most powerful and wealthy, are bound to obey it. Conservatives and constitutional lawyers recognize a rare and largely sentimental exception in the reigning monarch and foreign diplomats; but these too are expected to observe the law – only they are privileged from being tried by the courts if they do not.

A third fundamental principle of the rule of law is that people should not take the law into their own hands. This rule is not absolute; all civilized codes admit in some degree the principle of self-help or self-defence. But, except in extreme emergencies, the rule of law excludes self-help. Appeal should be made to the courts or, failing the courts, to a democratic government to change the law. Appeal should not normally be made to force, for this in the end is the negation of all reason, all law, all order, all liberty, all right.

This was the fundamental objection which Conservatives had to the General Strike in 1926. It was not the merits or demerits of the miners' case or of the T.U.C., which were far more evenly

1. *The Rule of Law*, London (Conservative Political Centre), 1955.

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balanced. It was the naked demand to a constitutionally elected government: 'Capitulate or we hold up the entire economic life of the community' which stirred Conservative feeling to unanimous resistance.

A further principle of the rule of law is that laws should be passed only after adequate and public discussion. It is in this respect, amongst others, that law differs from mere regulation. A regulation, however wise, is formulated inside a Government department and often signed by quite a subordinate official. A law is passed by Parliament after full debate. For this reason individual Conservatives have taken a particular pride in scrutinizing the regulations of various Government departments. In the main, however, Conservatives have recognized that legislation by regulation is a necessary evil and contented themselves by looking very carefully at the powers in fact conferred on Ministers. An exception to this occurred in the war-time Parliament, when Conservative back benchers induced the Coalition Government to institute a new select Committee of the House whose business it would be to look into these regulations and report any demanding closer consideration to the House. This Scrutiny Committee is still usefully at work fifteen years later, and has indeed become an integral part of Parliamentary control of the Government.

To sum up, then, in words that were written after the first edition of this book:

The palladium of English liberty is not the laws themselves (which have often been bad), but the rule of law – the steady enforcement of a few precious principles which have been found by the strictest tests of practice over many centuries best to serve the ends of human personality. These few principles, and the wholly utilitarian devices which Englishmen have evolved for their maintenance and enforcement . . . have gone abroad and blossomed under the generalizing passions of less empirical peoples into universal 'Rights of Man'. The English have never cared for this, their novel and high-falutin' cut and fashion. They still call them 'the rights of Englishmen', and they know (or they knew until lately) how and where to enforce them in their concrete reality.¹

1. R. J. White, *The Conservative Tradition*, London (Nicholas Kaye, now Black), 1950, pp. 5-6.

12. PROGRESS

IN claiming that Conservatives believe in the idea of progress I shall be thought by some to be asserting a paradox, by others to be buying at the bottom of the market a stock which is not likely to recover. To the first I reply that if my argument has been acceptable to this point the conclusion inescapably follows. To the second, that their scepticism is born partly of cynicism, partly of an inadequate study of the subject.

In the struggle for a better life we can speak with confidence of men, things, and institutions which are on our side.

Such are the security of human life and property, the impartiality of justice, the incorruptibility of the public service, the freedom of worship.

These are the legal and political conditions without which the good life would be impossible.

But there are also economic conditions the development of which has gone hand in hand with the others. We cannot say that an ordered state of society, with an incorruptible public service, individual freedom, and an impartial justice is necessary to economic development without saying in the same breath that a developing economy, in which material wealth is slowly accumulated and the resources of society are gradually worked up from the bare minimum of a medieval agricultural people to the uncounted and immeasurable physical apparatus at the command of a modern nation, is also a necessary condition and a great assistance to the furtherance of the very political ends which seem to some extent to bring it into being.

When destructive tendencies seem to conspire to bring the good life down to the level of barbarism we call the result 'a vicious circle'.

I sometimes want to use the expression 'a virtuous circle' to describe a state of affairs where different good influences, none in themselves sufficient for the purpose, combine together to

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improve human conditions, and bring about the very state of affairs which the vicious circle destroyed.

Our ancestors had a simple expression to describe the 'virtuous circle'. They called it 'progress', and by this single phrase they meant in the broad a theory of the history of the last six hundred years which on the whole has been true.

Of all the things we recognize nowadays as being on the side of the angels the greatest part have had their origin at a comparatively recent point of time.

Hospitals, schools, religious institutions of all sorts, friendly societies, rambling clubs, debating societies, art and music circles, athletic clubs, sporting associations, social centres – yes, and the small sweet and tobacco shop round the corner – none of these existed, except perhaps in a rudimentary form, in the Dark Ages.

Each and all have come into being at a point of time. Each and all on the whole help to bring about a state of society which assists the others. The virtuous circle of progress has been working slowly in our favour over six hundred years, with notable set-backs, frequent disappointments, and some complete breakdowns.

This fact, which Conservatives accept, was at the basis of the Liberal belief in 'progress' – the Ark of the Covenant to our fathers, but sadly jeered at in our time.

Conservatives, however, have always differed from their Liberal friends by denying that there was anything automatic about this process. The motion of the circle can and does slow down, arrest itself, or even go into reverse. There is nothing inevitable about progress. History records many examples of the circle unwinding itself and what we call civilization descending into barbarism or savagery. Indeed, there are some who think that our own civilization has passed the point at which it can be said to be progressing, and that the virtuous circle of our fathers has become vicious.

Nevertheless Conservatives believe that a lesson can be learned from the progress which has undoubtedly taken place in the course of the last six or eight centuries. They believe that an analysis can be made of the factors which have made such

progress possible, and that failure to record and establish these factors will in the end inevitably result in the process reversing itself, as has already happened in several countries in our time.

Conservatives therefore see the progress of civilization not as something certain and inevitable, guaranteed by any law, natural or divine, for they know that the process can be reversed. On the contrary, they see in progress something of the miraculous, by which man, over countless millennia, clammers painfully from the primeval slime to something a little lower than the angels.

Not regarding man as by himself perfectible, they are somewhat awed at his partial achievement, and not the least impressed to learn from the scientist and the historian that, man having been upon the planet nearly a hundred thousand years, those ages of his existence which might by some stretch of the imagination be regarded as civilized have all been in the last six thousand, and that these civilizations themselves have been silly, transient, imperfect things, compared with the vast spaces of savagery extending both in space and time which have divided them.

This profound reverence towards the process of civilization, this care for it, this realization that it is not something certain and solid which may be relied on, but something fragile and precarious, delicately poised, easily broken, hardly recovered, and imperfectly achieved, these emotions are characteristically Conservative, and characteristically in contrast with the ideologies of the left.

So the Conservative views the injustices of our time, the poverty, the crime, lust, squalor, ignorance and disease, the human misery. The leftist impatiently cries aloud against these things. 'A disgrace,' he exclaims when he sees a slum or a queue outside a labour exchange, 'a disgrace to twentieth-century England.' The Conservative replies, not here insensitive, but more mature: 'Not a disgrace, but a challenge. This which you behold is no characteristic of capitalism, no failure of Christianity, no shocking indictment of the little jacks-in-office who have strutted on the stage of government for a quinquennium or a decade. This is the primeval challenge to civilization. This is

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the primeval slime and poverty still adhering to our imperfect culture. Clean it off by all means if you can, particle by particle if you must. But do not blame the culture of a bare three generations for failing in a century to remove the deep-laid deposit of misery which a century of millennia has left undisturbed.'

More than this, Conservatives claim to see in the history of progress two factors which make it possible – the factor which first brings into the world good things which are new, and which we call enterprise, and the factor which enables us to preserve them when brought in. This second factor we call continuity.

13. CONTINUITY

THE Conservative regards progress and continuity as two complementary political conceptions. You cannot have progress without continuity; you cannot have continuity without progress. For this reason, 'Such a breach in the natural and orderly development of the constitution as occurred in seventeenth-century England or eighteenth-century France fills the Conservative with repulsion and alarm.'¹

This point being so fundamental to the Conservative tradition has been made so clearly and so plainly before by Conservative writers that this chapter must be of necessity almost one long series of quotations, notably from Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

'People will not look forward to posterity,' said Burke, 'who never look backward to their ancestors.' Burke saw in the continuity of British institutions the best guarantee of their further improvement.

'You will observe,' he said, 'that from Magna Carta to the Declaration of Right it has been the uniform policy of our Constitution to claim and assert our liberties as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity.'

The progress of our society, he considered, could only be ensured within the framework of institutions regarded almost as sacred.

You see, sir, that in this enlightened age, I am bold enough to confess that we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our old prejudices we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have

1. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England*. London (Macmillan), 1933, p. 20.

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lasted and the more generally they have prevailed the more we cherish them. We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages. Many of our men on speculation instead of exploding general prejudices employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom that prevails in them.

This passage breathes the very spirit of Conservatism.

In regarding continuity as a condition of progress the Conservative appeals to history – to the history of this country as illustrating and emphasizing the point he wishes to make – to the history of other countries – notably those which have a history of revolution as pointing the contrast.

The unhappy history of that glorious and gifted people, the French, from 1789 onwards, is as good an illustration of what Conservatives mean as any other.

Few can doubt that the ideas of 1789 were ideas for the benefit of mankind, for the advancement of Church and Commonwealth, for the increase of liberty, for the improvement of material conditions.

Yet never from 1789 until the present has the history of that nation which first proclaimed them proved happy – Why? Because, the Conservative proclaims, they ignored the principle of continuity. They lacked a healthy Conservatism which at the same time desired reform. The terrible blood-letting of the Revolution; the still more terrible blood-letting of the Napoleonic wars; defeat; the July Monarchy; the happier but burlesque interlude of Louis Philippe; barricades again; then the unprincipled materialism of the Second Empire; Sedan; the Third Republic; Dreyfus; 1914; Stavisky; the 40-hour week with Hitler across the border; Vichy; the short-lived Fourth Republic. This terrible series of catastrophic events pursuing like the curse of Atreus one of the most cultured and civilized of the peoples of Europe is the best commentary upon those who criticize Burke's reflexions, grimly prophetic, upon the deliberations and actions of that revolutionary assembly in that fateful year 1790.

CONTINUITY

You began ill, because you began by despising everything that belonged to you. Respecting your forefathers you would have been taught to respect yourselves. You would not have chosen to consider the French as a people of yesterday, as a nation low-born, servile wretches until 1789.

He pointed out that all this was unnecessary if the principle of continuity had been respected.

By following wise examples you would have given new examples of wisdom to the world. You would have rendered the cause of liberty venerable. You would have shamed despotism for the earth, by showing that freedom was not only reconcilable, but, as when well disciplined, it is auxiliary to law. You would have had a free constitution, potent monarchy, a disciplined army, a reformed and venerated clergy, a mitigated but spirited nobility. You would have had a liberal order of commons, a satisfied, laborious, and obedient people. You had a smooth and easy career of felicity and glory laid open to you, beyond anything recorded in the history of the world. But you have shown that difficulty is good for man.

14. ENTERPRISE

CONTINUITY is the one condition of progress. But there is another. Continuity can maintain and improve a situation in which the other conditions of progress already exist.

Continuity guarantees the enforcement of law. Continuity assumes the preservation of peace. Neither internal disorder nor foreign conquest are compatible with the principle of continuity.

But peace and contentment are only conditions precedent to progress. Themselves, they create nothing new. The divine spark is lacking. The actual content of innovation comes from some inspiration in the hearts of individuals living in these favourable conditions.

We must look elsewhere for the motive power which sets the virtuous circle moving in a favourable direction. What is the secret of this movement? What is the factor which makes new things, good or bad, come into existence? How can we assist or accelerate the process? This is one of the major problems of statesmanship.

Conservatives claim that the source of human change, whether beneficial or the reverse, is not some impersonal law of nature, nor yet a matter of coincidence or chance, but the sum of an infinite number of tiny impulses created by the individual efforts of innumerable men and women occasionally accelerated or retarded by the influence of a genius.

To this factor they give the name 'individual enterprise'. Are they wrong to do so? Whether the activity be that of a state, a commercial corporation, a hospital, or a school, the impulse which created it came from the brain and will of individuals, in the last resort that of an individual.

Individual enterprise in this sense is thus at the very heart and origin of progress. In using this phrase Conservatives are fully aware that it has become somewhat shop-soiled and worn in the course of constant political controversy.

Often, but not always, enterprise is called into being by the so-called profit motive. Whether this be so or not, and it is not by any means always so, it remains the secret of all human improvement.

Modern nursing was not brought into being by the Army Medical Service, but by Florence Nightingale. Elizabeth Fry and no Home Secretary of the day stimulated prison reform. In the world of education my own grandfather was something of a pioneer. Practically all advances in morals, science, religion, or social organization were due in the first place to the enterprise of individuals, frowned upon at first by officialdom and public opinion alike.

Only when enterprise has proved successful, only when it has made itself secure and built up a position from which it cannot be dislodged does the community, painfully lumbering behind its geniuses, its pioneers, and its saints, take over and administer – on a grander scale, perhaps, sometimes more efficiently, but certainly without the vigour and enthusiasm of genius – the work which individuals have begun. Conservatives observe with impatience the fantastic conservatism of a community in administration.

By the like token, when this stage is reached, and the community takes over the log cabins built by the pioneers, the true frontiersmen of civilization, those rare beings in whom a new idea is born, and more rarely still brought to fruition, have moved painfully on, and are breaking new ground in the progress of civilization against as much opposition and discouragement as their fathers knew.

Conservatives do not on the whole condemn the caution of communities and groups in accepting new ideas. Such ideas are not always good. Indeed it would be true to say that the process of invention and pioneering is as profligate in its wastefulness as any of the other operations of nature.

But it is vain to look to the community and not to the natural adventurer, to the official and not to the pioneer, for the creation of novelty. The community which fails to recognize that really new ideas are always the inspiration of individuals, and fails either to create a situation encouraging to originality or to

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reward adequately those who have taken on themselves the burdens and persecutions which are the inevitable and perhaps the not unjust lot of the pioneer, is not likely to have many new institutions or industries, or to remain long in the van of progress. There can be such a thing as too much conservatism. This point is reached when a Socialist state has succeeded in discouraging individuals from trying out new ideas at their own risk and on their own responsibility.

15. PROFIT

IN the main, individual enterprise has come to be identified with the profit motive. In this motive I include not merely the desire to obtain a 'profit' in the strict sense, that is the desire to buy and resell at a higher price, but the desire for any material reward for service or labour, especially when this is graduated in proportion to achievement or skill.

Conservatives support enterprise in this narrower sense: they do not believe that without it society can be made to function as efficiently, nor do they believe that without the institution of private property, with which profit is closely connected, the individual can attain his fullest development.

The highest secular incentive, as Conservatives maintain, is patriotism. Such an incentive has inspired some of the noblest of our fellow countrymen in the past. Nevertheless, patriotism is not enough. If it be wrong for the individual to exploit the necessities of the community, it is no less wrong for the community to exploit the nobility or good nature of individuals. Even if the individual does not demand, his fellow countrymen should see that he receives a reward commensurate with his skill and effort.

But in the main human beings are not actuated, or are not actuated all the time, by public spirit. Experience goes to show that humanity, like our humble brother the ass, goes better if encouraged by the carrot and sometimes threatened with the stick. Most human beings work better if they hope to receive some material advantage proportionate to their diligence and skill, and no community of human beings will as a whole work honestly unless the minority who require the stick as well as the carrot receive a little of what they require. There is nothing quite so destructive of the morale of a good worker as to see the continued success and prosperity of the bad.

Conservatives do not, like old-fashioned Liberals, believe that the profit motive, left to itself, will automatically secure the

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public advantage. What they do believe is that the profit motive applied in aid of an agreed objective is a powerful stimulus to effort and production. Nor do they see anything to be ashamed of in working and trading for profit. They accept the old-fashioned Christian doctrine of the 'just price'. Granted that the love of money is the root of all evil, they are not prepared to condemn the small shopkeeper working on a small margin of profit rather than the trade unionist striking for higher wages. In each case the Conservative maintains that the labourer is worthy of his hire; in each case he condemns rapacity, but sees no objection to an honest business sense.

This leads us to consider the Conservative attitude to private enterprise.

Private enterprise is the right to buy and sell at a profit without the leave or licence of the Government. Quite obviously Government can, and does, control the law of sale most meticulously. Standards of quality, conditions of work, monopolies, restrictive practices, and commercial law are all proper matters of Government concern.

The State's right to limit private enterprise is determined by the public interest. The right to appear in the Courts, or to practise surgery, the right to sell medicines, or beer and tobacco, are limited in various ways – sometimes depending on qualification, sometimes on purely fiscal considerations, sometimes on considerations of public order. No one denies that within limits such interferences are proper and legitimate.

Nor does any Conservative deny that circumstances may exist in which the State has a right, without infringing private property, to grant a monopoly to itself or to some other public body. The Roman banker Crassus made a great fortune by running a private-enterprise fire brigade; he found that an owner whose house was burning down was willing to come to terms reasonably advantageous to the honest speculator. But that was before the Rome City Council ran a fire brigade of their own. There may be controversy as to which activities are properly the subject of public monopoly. The old view limited these to the armed forces, police, minting of currency, post office, administration of justice, local services (including fire

brigades), and a few odd things like digging for treasure trove or picking up stranded whales and sturgeons on the beach. Modern thought has greatly developed the list of public enterprises – monopolistic or otherwise – and controversy rages about trades and industries which, before, would never have been thought of at all as a proper field for State activity.

In this controversy the Conservative consistently supports private enterprise against State monopoly, and he does so not because of a bigoted or pedantic hatred either of monopoly or State enterprise (although he does dislike both), nor because he expects to win in all the controversies in which this battle line is adopted. He does so because, as a general principle, he regards private enterprise as a positive good, and more likely to serve the public interest than monopoly of any kind, or in particular than State monopoly.

The basis of the case for private enterprise is fourfold.

First, the Conservative believes that the existence of powerful and independent manufacturing and trading interests, though never without danger, is a public advantage as tending to the diffusion of power and therefore to the perpetuation of freedom in society.

Secondly, he considers that the individual has a right to determine for himself what he will buy with such money as he possesses. He has a right to buy a pint of beer or a copy of Monsignor Knox's translation of the New Testament, to wear a red tie or a black, to appear in a soft collar of any design he wants, to gamble (within limits), to save (within limits), to frivol, to study, or to give presents. These rights, the Conservative believes, can only be effectively enjoyed in a society where manufacture and trade are free. If Government or any one 'monopoly' controls all, the individual will not be free to choose what he will buy. A healthy competition between trades, or between individual trades, is, the Conservative thinks, an advantage to the public, even though it does not always ensure a margin of profit for traders. Private enterprise over a wide field is thus to the Conservative an essential safeguard of freedom.

Thirdly, the Conservative believes that great advances in technique and all the bold experiments have come from indi-

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viduals who at the time they began could scarcely be distinguished from eccentrics or cranks.

The Conservative respects the activity of the planner wherever the field of knowledge is sufficiently mapped. But he points out that the planner must always be the enemy of progress. Paradoxically enough, the objection of the Conservative to State enterprise lies in its excessive conservatism. It renders the march of progress almost impossible.

Lastly, the Conservative believes that the fallibility of the human spirit is far too great to make it healthy or wise to concentrate production and economic activity in a few hands without the possibility of challenge. Just consider, phase by phase, what would have happened if public enterprise, following always the best and most authoritative opinion, had governed the economic life of the nation in the past. What would the Socialist Government of the day whose economic plan envisaged the development of a network of stage coaches all over England in which much public money was invested have made of the steam engine and the railway train? What would the great trade unions of coach drivers have had to say? They can operate a cable and wireless system already built up after years of experimentation and competition. But would they have inaugurated and sponsored or suppressed a development of revolutionary conception which promised to cost much and, when developed, to supersede the already reliable system of telegraphs? Consider how often, since the nationalization of the coal mines, has the cry been heard of 'unfair' competition from more modern sources of power.

16. PROPERTY

CONSERVATIVES support the institution of private property and, in the main, the conduct of business through private enterprise.

It is, however, important not to confuse the case for one with the other. Each is separate and distinct.

It would be perfectly possible, for instance, under a system of Guild Socialism, to imagine a state of society in which no industry was nationalized but in which private property, in the sense in which it is understood by Conservatives, was proscribed.

It would also be possible to imagine a state of society in which the main business enterprises were nationalized but in which the theoretical basis of private property was left unchallenged.

This chapter deals with the case for private property. The case against nationalization is examined in Chapter 20.

The institution of private property is to be justified on four main interconnected grounds.

First, the possession of property is a right of the individual – a legitimate aspiration which human beings as such are naturally entitled to pursue as a means of developing their personalities.

Second, private property is the natural right and safeguard of the family, which is itself the natural unit of society and is and ought to be the foundation of the whole fabric of civilized society.

Third, private property is to the interest of the community, since the desire to obtain it provides an incentive for work which is morally legitimate and at the same time sufficiently material to operate on natures which in most of us contain certain elements not entirely spiritual or unselfseeking.

Fourth, private property – including some large fortunes – is the natural bulwark of liberty because it ensures that economic power is not entirely in the hands of the State.

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First, then, to seek private property by legitimate work, and to enjoy it once obtained, is a natural right of the individual.

The case here is based on a proposition not by any means confined to Conservatives. Mr Gollancz writes:

Our central value – or to put it in another way, the value that includes all our other values – is respect for personality . . . there is in every human being, we say, something as much in *its* own right as my selfconsciousness tells me that I am in *mine*.¹

Conservatives agree with this doctrine, although some of us think that the whole thing has been put in very much better language before:

'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy mind, with all thy soul and with all thy strength. This is the first, and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'²

The truth is that by this standard of values stand condemned all the major philosophies of our time, Nazism because of its contempt of God and hatred of Jews and Slavs, Communism because of its denial of God and hatred of landlords and capitalists, Liberalism because it ignored God and believed that self-love was an adequate substitute for our duty towards our neighbour.

But Socialism stands condemned by the same rubric. It ignores God and believes that an intelligent group of men working at the centre of things have the right to tell us all what things are good for us.

If Conservatism escapes this condemnation it is only because as a philosophy it is not complete. Conservatism was never intended to take the place of a religion and whole areas of theory and metaphysic are left deliberately by Conservatives for religion to describe.

As a Conservative I frankly admit that it is not easy to seek to justify the institution of private property except on a religious hypothesis; but by the like token it is unfair to attack private

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

2. Matt. 22:37.

property because it is enjoyed and defended by individuals who do not respect the religious law.

The basis of the justification for the right to own private property is ultimately the belief in the infinite value of human personality, but this value can only be seen in its true light in a world assumed to be theocentric – God-centred.

'We have obligations to mankind at large, which are not a consequence of any special voluntary pact,' wrote Burke. 'They arise from the relation of man to man, and the relation of man to God, which relations are not matters of choice.'

The possession of property by the individual is the essential condition of this liberty. No man is fully free unless possessing some rights of property in something, since property is the means whereby he develops his personality by impressing it upon his external surroundings without dependence on the will of others. No degree of security, no ration scale however generous, no organized hostelry with furniture and services all provided, no uniform clothing however lavish or becoming is a substitute for property. Property is in itself a good and a legitimate aspiration for human striving.

When property is achieved, it becomes a responsibility – a duty as well as a right – a duty to develop the property as a thing of beauty or utility for the honour of God, a duty to share it with others as a means of winning their love and understanding, a duty to use it in such a way that it does not infringe the human rights and dignities of others.

Even the Marxists admit a certain degree of property. Even the Roman slave enjoyed a *peculium* – the few odds and ends he had been able to scrape together during his servitude, and to each state slave the Marxist would assign something of the same kind – a little pocket money, food, lodging, clothing, a few personal possessions, and a good many perks.

But such trash is no substitute for property as Conservatives understand it. According to Conservatives, the aim of every man may legitimately include the possession of enough private property to own, if he desires it, a house and a garden, to bring up a family, including the provision of an education different

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from if not better than the table d'hôte afforded by the State, to indulge a reasonable hobby, and to end in his old age with a little more than the State pension, however generous. These are his aims, and he should be given not the realization of them, but a fair chance in life to realize them.

We may be a long way off it, but this is the ideal – a 'property-owning democracy' – which Conservatives hold, and we have gone a long way to the realization of it in this country in the eight years of Conservative Government.

Conservatives see in property a good, best enjoyed by the individual and not held in trust for the group by the State, and they regard themselves as opposed unalterably to the view that it is an evil, or that it ought to be concentrated in the Government and taken away from the individual in return for a right to vote once every five years for the people who are to use it.

Secondly, private property is a natural right of the family, and generally of the subordinate group. Liberals and Socialists tend to see the tension between State and individual in terms of stark and unrelieved contrast.

Conservatives do not take this view. They refuse to treat either the State or the individual as absolute. Human souls, as they see it, exist as individuals, but as individuals forming part not merely of a political community but of various groups, of which the most important is the family. The perpetuation of these groups – families, local communities, voluntary associations – is a prime object of Conservative policy; Conservatives also regard it as essential to their perpetuation that groups and individuals should be able to possess and bequeath private property, including, if need be, considerable fortunes.

In particular, although Conservatives are prepared to concede the necessity of a graduated death duty as a means of fairly distributing the burden of taxation, they are unable to understand the idea that men should be entitled to make fortunes for themselves but not be free to bequeath a proportion of them to others when they die. They are convinced that to deprive them of this is to deprive them of one of the rights to which human beings are properly entitled as such to aspire.

It will be said in answer to all this that what Conservatives

are really concerned to protect is the rights not of small properties, but of really large fortunes.

If by this is meant that Conservatives wish to exempt large fortunes from differential taxation, this is simply untrue, and history refutes it. Conservatives fully accept the proposition that in a Christian country no one ought to go hungry or short of any of the necessities through no fault while others are well fed; they also agree that in wars and hours of emergency the possessors of property must provide the funds before men can be required to hypothecate their bodies or even mortgage their labour.

But there is a sense in which Conservatives are concerned to protect large fortunes. Conservatives believe that the incentive to possess property by legitimate means is one of the most valuable aids to the production and increase of wealth. Provided that others are not thereby impoverished or harmed they consider that the possession of large fortunes is a good – a good both absolutely and relatively because it tends to the diffusion of economic power and away from its concentration in the hands of the Government.

Nor have Conservatives the smallest objection to the existence of a leisured class which uses its leisure well. On the contrary, however short the working hours of life become, Conservatives believe that a leisured class has much to bring to society – both in culture and wisdom.

Burke quotes in this connexion from Ecclesiasticus¹: 'The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure; and he that hath little business shall become wise.' While not claiming divine inspiration for this sentiment, Conservatives at least assert that it is common sense, and note that, historically speaking, the great efflorescences of art, literature, scholarship, and abstract thought have been closely associated with the existence of leisure. It may well be that the busy politicians and technicians, no less than the operatives referred to by the author of Ecclesiasticus, come within his criticism of busy men in politics:

They shall not be sought for in publick counsel, nor sit high in the congregation: they shall not sit on the judges' seat, nor understand

1. Eccius. 38:34.

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the sentence of judgement: they cannot declare justice and judgement; and they shall not be found where parables are spoken. But they will maintain the state of the world.

Two qualifications need to be made of the general position. that Conservatives defend and support the institution of private property.

In the first place the fact that Conservatives defend property as an institution does not mean that they necessarily defend any particular kind or sort of property. There are as many examples in which particular kinds of private property, including sometimes kinds of property which originally served a useful purpose, may be harmful or may have become harmful in course of time.

Mining royalties and tithes are examples of classes of property which have been extinguished under Conservatives administrations.

But, secondly, there are also cases where the rights of private owners, although themselves perfectly legitimate, ought not to prevail against the public interest. The clearest example is the generally conceded right of the Government to acquire land for public purposes. Both Acquisition of Land Acts and Housing Acts provide examples of this kind.

Nevertheless in both these cases – both where a right is acquired and where one is extinguished – however undesirable, Conservatives believe that proper compensation should be paid.

For these reasons Conservatives maintain that wherever it is legitimate – and for whatever reason – to override the proprietary rights of the individual it is the business of the State to provide sufficient compensation to safeguard the legitimate expectations of those who are expropriated.

17. THE LAND

IN a famous election address which rightly won him the privilege of representing Oxford University, Mr A. P. Herbert, as he then was, concluded with the following words:

'Agriculture. I know nothing about agriculture.'

I should gladly have begun and concluded this chapter with the same words. Unhappily, as I shall hope to show, this would not be quite true, and, even if it were, the book I wrote, however Conservative it were in tone, would cease to be a book about Conservatism if it did not contain a chapter on the land.

In a sense it is an advantage from this point of view that the chapter should be written by one who has no claim to be an agricultural expert.¹ These abound in the Conservative Party, and like all enthusiasts are apt to be a little intolerant of those who do not share to the full their expert knowledge and at the same time absolutely furious if each one of their own propositions is not accepted.

Nevertheless no book about Conservatism would be complete without an account of the Conservative attitude to the land, for the simple truth is that there would have been no Conservative Party to-day had it not been for the consistent championship of agriculture by the Conservative Party from 1846 onwards, and that but for this championship, however apparently unsuccessful, there would have been little or no agriculture either.

But the case is more profound than this. Agriculture was the occupation which to some extent determined the attitude of Conservatives to industry and indeed to politics in general, and it is often the ignorance of agriculture (in which some of the deepest industrial problems are reduced to simpler terms) which makes the Conservative viewpoint difficult to put over to a city

1. Since writing this in 1947, I have come to own and run a market garden and a farm, but prefer to alter little in this chapter.

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audience. It is an attitude to the agricultural industry which explains and defines more simply than any other the Conservative approach to the profit motive.

Conservatives, as is well known, have no fault to find with the profit motive as such. All farming in this country is carried on with a view to profit. But nevertheless it is a complete travesty of the Conservative attitude to contend that profit is the sole governing motive of which Conservatives approve in industry. The farmer who farms *solely* with a view to profit is not a good farmer. He impoverishes the land instead of enriching it. The Conservative view of agriculture, and of industry in general, whilst it does not discountenance profit, is based primarily on the theory of good husbandry. It is the agriculture of traditional British farming and not the bastard agriculture of the American dust bowl which attracts Conservatives.

What does this imply? What is good husbandry? How does it differ from mere profit seeking? Can the motive of good husbandry be applied to industry as well as agriculture?

I write now primarily as a townsman, who knows and loves the country, for townfolk like myself. Let me introduce you to British agriculture as good husbandry has made it.

The best thing we can do to begin with is to take a walk on Wimbledon Common. Not much will grow on Wimbledon Common. There is scrub, gorse, heath; there are countless tracks made by pedestrians. The soil is poor. Much is covered by trees. There are no fences. Cattle would roam and catch disease.

One's first reaction to all this is that this was ground which it was not profitable to plant or fence. But this is not true. Wimbledon Common is a common by historical accident. When the Conqueror came, our land was almost all as bad as this, or worse. It was fen, forest, moor, heath; our cattle were scrub cattle; our wheat represented no consistent strain; in consequence our people lived on the verge of starvation, yet such is the virtue of the English soil, much better off than many of their continental neighbours.

Scientific British agriculture began somewhere about the

reign of Charles I.¹ It consisted in draining, liming, manuring, fencing, breeding, selecting, clearing, improving the land. When you go to a typical British farm to-day you see the result not of the efforts of a good or a bad farmer (though a bad farmer may ruin a good farm in a surprisingly short space of time). What you see is the concentrated result of some twelve generations of good husbandry, the devoted effort which for over four centuries Englishmen have lavished *on the land*. I emphasize the words *on the land* because, although all the farmers worked for profit and the labourers for hire, neither the farmers nor the labourers received the true reward of their effort. The real reward redounded to the benefit of England: not just of the Englishmen of that time, but of the Englishmen of a future time. They returned to the land in the form of manure, good drains, sound fences, and deeply cultivated fields more than they took out of it by way of sustenance for man and beast, until, strange to relate, the average yield per acre of wheat from an English field is vastly greater than that of the Canadian wheat belt, and almost unsurpassed anywhere in the world.

That is good husbandry, and that is the fundamental attitude of the Conservative Party to farming, and to industry for that matter. The profit motive is accepted and is used as the normal driving force, but it is not to be permitted to dominate, for if it does we shall do violence to the heritage which we have received from of old.

It is this attitude, too, which the Conservative holds towards progress. To the city dweller progress often means, and rightly means, clearing away unsightly slums, scrapping what our fathers built, and starting on absolutely new lines.

The farmer does not do this. To the farmer progress means improving the land and its productivity by taking what the devoted efforts of our fathers has given, and making it better. This is Conservatism; the other (also admirable in its time and place) is Radicalism. Neither is of necessity reactionary, but both may be – Radicalism more so than true Conservatism, for by his ruthless scrapping of tradition the Radical runs the risk

1. I think I may be doing some injustice to the monks in writing this. If so, I apologize.

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of doing the most 'reactionary' thing of all – returning to primeval barbarism.

Conservatives were driven to their attitude very largely by the menace of cheap imports to British agriculture in the nineteenth century.

The theory of *laissez faire* – the religion which 'made the altars of Mammon blaze with triple worship' – preached that in the long run it paid to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market. It was cheaper to buy the products of those who raped the virgin prairie of America without restoring what they took out, and were thus busy creating new deserts in a highly fertile land, than to buy the costly products of England's highly dugged and fertile fields, which would be handed on better and more beautiful than they had been inherited. Rather than pay wages which would have enabled the poor to buy British products, it gave them access to the markets of the world. There is a sense in which it was right. The new philosophy, as I have conceded, was very nearly true. But it was not quite true, and it is worth while explaining why.

We have seen how Liberalism, applied to factories and cities, produced slums and jerry-built houses, neglected the arts and beauties of town planning and raised what Disraeli called the 'wail of intolerable serfage' from the wage slaves.

The doctrine of buying in the lowest and selling in the dearest market includes a great deal of truth. But it ignores the long-term welfare of the race – the land, the virility and health of a people, and the spiritual and the religious values it deliberately excludes from policy. It is dust bowl farming – both literally and metaphorically, and the Conservative protests that unchecked it will produce a desert.

Conservatives saw this first in relation to agriculture, and they have been consistent to their vision. It was in defence of British agriculture that the Party went into the wilderness after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. The protection of agriculture was one of the primary objects of its long advocacy of tariffs earlier in the century. After 1931, the National Government, backed by a Conservative majority, laid the foundations of a new policy which drew the industry out of the depths of

depression and made possible its vital contribution to victory in the war of 1939-45. To-day, having modified the war-time support to suit a peace-time economy, we have a system of guaranteed prices which provides an insurance to farmers against a serious drop in returns, an incentive to improve their efficiency and quality, and a method by which the choice of the housewife can be reflected back to the farm.

The cost of providing this support is high, and the liability is commonly justified on a variety of grounds. The first is the strengthening of the nation's defence in time of war. The second is the strengthening of the balance of payments, where we grow food at home that would otherwise have to be paid for in scarce currencies. Both of these have been valid arguments in the past, though they will not necessarily and in all circumstances be so. The argument that will always be irrefutable is the social argument - the need to maintain a healthy balance between town and country, and a way of life essential for the well-being of the community.

The Conservative believes - and so far science has borne him out - that a purely urban community tends to die out. That this is not wholly true is obvious from the survival of the Jews in spite of the absence of direct contact with the land for many centuries. But in the main Conservatives are justified in claiming that an agricultural population forms the best possible stock for maintaining naturally a healthy breed of men. This means that Conservatives act in the best tradition of their philosophy when they insist on measures to provide good living and working conditions for those who labour on the land.

'Gentlemen,' said Disraeli to his constituents in Shrewsbury over a hundred years ago, 'when I talk of the preponderance of the landed interest, do not for a moment suppose that I mean merely the preponderance of "squires of high degree" . . . I am looking to the population of our innumerable villages, to the crowds in our rural towns: aye, and I mean even something more than that by the landed interest - I mean the estate of the poor. . . .'

Whatever may be the taunts and gibes of those who do not understand the countryside - the countryside remains funda-

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mentally Conservative, and Conservative politics are fundamentally conformable to the rhythm and vitality of a people firmly rooted in the soil.

· To the Conservative the land of his country is a priceless heritage from the past – like our other heritages and traditions, to be handed on improved to those who follow after.

18. SOCIAL PROVISION

THE first proposition about social services which it is still necessary for a Conservative to substantiate is that his own Party was intimately connected both with their origin and their development. He would be reasonably content to base this claim on Lord Attlee's famous assertion that 'In the building up of the great structure of our social services, all parties in the State have borne their part'.¹ Unfortunately even this, not over-generous, admission proved unacceptable to Lord Attlee's lieutenants, who in their propaganda and indeed their policy statements have appropriated the creation of the Welfare State to the Labour Party. This is historically untrue; or rather it bears the same sort of relationship to truth as if a midwife, responsible for cutting the umbilical cord, had claimed paternity of the child.

The modern Welfare State, with all its advantages and shortcomings, its blessings and blemishes, is the creation of the war-time Coalition Government; and whilst it is true that this Government was representative of all parties, it was in its composition, and even more in its Parliamentary support, preponderantly Conservative. Before ever the Labour Government assumed power, the Committees had been appointed (or had even reported) – Beveridge on social security, Curtis on deprived children, Rushcliffe on legal aid; the White Papers had been published – on national insurance and national health; and two of the most important pieces of legislation passed – for education and for family allowances.

Yet even this is not the whole truth; for the Welfare State did not spring like Athene of old, fully fashioned from the head of the Coalition Zeus. It is much better regarded as the cumulative product of our usually belated responses to three distinct crises in economic history stretching over the best part of four hundred years.

1. Broadcast, 4 July 1948.

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The first crisis was the agrarian revolution of the sixteenth century, which found its response in the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 – for which, one imagines, no Party could, or perhaps would, care to claim credit. The second was the prolonged industrial revolution, which led first to the Evangelical and Tory crusade for better conditions in factory and mine, then to Disraeli's policy of sewage, and only lastly to the Liberals in their Indian summer bringing the magic of averages to the comfort of millions. The third crisis, within the memory of most of us, was the great depression between the two World Wars, which caused men to set their hearts on a new dispensation in which jobs for all would be the ark of the covenant, and a foolproof safety net would prevent any man or woman, however old or weak or unfortunate, from falling below a basic standard.

Later the possible future of this Welfare State may be indicated; for the moment we are concerned with basic outlooks and principles. Those of the Conservatives are only too frequently impugned. There are some who say that Conservatives itch to destroy the social services, others quite differently accuse Conservatives of supporting them nowadays out of an opportunist 'me-tooism'. Both are wrong, and a Party which pioneered factory reform, completed the legalizing of trade unions, founded public health administration and workmen's compensation, introduced the contributory pensions system, launched the slum clearance campaigns, started the milk-in-schools scheme, and used its majority to pass all the great operative Education Acts of this century, may be forgiven if it brands both kinds of criticism as impudent, ignorant, and shallow.

All this does not mean that there are not fundamental differences of social philosophy, and therefore ultimately of social policy, between Conservatives and Socialists. The attack on poverty, on Giant Want as Lord Beveridge christened him, is the corner-stone of all social service schemes, and the Conservative theory of poverty differs profoundly from the Socialist. According to the Socialist, the interest of the classes in a nation is profoundly and irreconcilably different. The poverty of the one is caused by the wealth of the other, and until the

wealth of the one is terminated by murder or force (Communism) or by legal expropriation (Socialism), want and misery will be the lot of the majority.

The Conservative theory is that despite obvious divergences of interest, rich and poor are united in a common brotherhood, humanity, and particularly in a common family or nation, that their fundamental interests coincide in peace ultimately no less than in war, and that, while a redistribution of property (sanctioned it will be remembered by the old Mosaic Code) may be no bad thing from time to time, the incentive of inequality, if inequality corresponds to skill and energy, is one of the main means whereby new wealth can be created, and active characters spurred on to produce of their best – to the great advantage of mankind at large.

So far from being the cause of poverty Conservatives believe it demonstrable historically that the most decisive steps which have been taken in the past towards a higher standard of living for the mass of the people have in fact been taken as the result of this incentive operating on the minds of a few. That it requires control, they do not deny. They do not dispute that the masses are entitled to demand and receive their fair share of the new goods created, a share which must increase rapidly as the original discoverers and developers of the novelty are succeeded by ordinary commercial exploitation – but they do not refuse recognition to the pioneer, or all reward to the business executive or investor.

Conservatives point out that misery and unspeakable poverty on a scale scarcely imaginable in the poorest corner of the globe to-day was the primeval lot of the race, and that even to-day the poorest families in Britain are millionaires compared with many of their fellow men elsewhere. Civilization consists in the slow and wearisome raising up of humanity from the depths of the primeval mire, and Conservatives argue that, historically speaking, in the great advances which have been made, a combination of brains and opportunity has been stimulated into action by the ordinary and homely motive of striving to win something better for one's family than has been known in the past, that what has come into being where these qualities are

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rightly used is something new – either something qualitatively new in the case of a new invention, or just something quantitatively new like an ordinary new motor car. Conservatives are not in the least abashed that these things have been often produced by the actual labour of others hired for the purpose. If the idea and the organization had been lacking, the same labour would have produced nothing.

On purely practical grounds, therefore, Conservatives proclaim the need for an Opportunity State to match and sustain the Welfare State; that is to say, whilst they are anxious that there should be an appropriate mechanism for distributing golden eggs, they put prior emphasis on the need to create and maintain the conditions under which the goose will lay them. Such conditions are not compatible with an egalitarian view of society, which from the point of view of social provision, aside from any other consideration, is utterly self-defeating.

Conservatives believe that in a free society the incentives to make oneself unequal are a necessary part of the mechanism of creating new wealth and therefore new welfare. But even if this were not so, there would still be powerful arguments against the assumption by the State of the exclusive rôle of Grand Almoner consequent upon an egalitarian elimination of private means.

The first argument against such a development is a moral one. When the Hebrew prophets of the seventh century before Christ adjured the members of their community to 'open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in the land', they may have left too much to the liberality of the individual; but at least their adjuration reminds us that a citizen cannot discharge his obligations to society and make the State the keeper of his conscience and duty by the simple device of paying his rates and taxes. Nobody could argue, without a cruel and ridiculous perversity, that the poor need to be kept poor in order that the rich may be enabled to exercise the virtue of charity. It would, however, be equally perverse, and involve the death of human society, to push the redistribution of income and property to the point where the life-giving principle of voluntary action failed at the source, and nothing in social

service could safely be left to the sense, reason, morality, and religion of the individual.

The second argument against such a development of social policy, which stems from this first, is that in social even more than in economic progress it is the individual and not the State which is traditionally and necessarily the pioneer. The 'One Nation' group of Conservative Members of Parliament pointed this out clearly when they wrote:

The expenditure of public money necessarily involves parity of treatment and tends to eliminate discretion. In large things and small, this necessity impoverishes the social services. Special needs, which lie outside the scope of the services demanded by contemporary public opinion, or standards higher than those at which the public purse can aim, are the proper objects of private gifts and foundations. In education, in the treatment of the sick, and in the care of the young and the aged it will be found that historically the course of the social services has been piloted by private initiative – whether it be Dr Barnardo's or Manchester Grammar School, Guy's Hospital or the village almshouses. That leadership which by its nature the State cannot exercise depends on the existence of aggregations of wealth at the disposal of individuals.¹

But there is a third argument which seems to me by far the strongest and most compelling against the egalitarian usurpation by the State of the whole mechanism of social provision. Whatever the finances of publicly-organized social services, it is an essential condition of a free society, Conservatives would say, that a man should be entitled not to use them if he does not wish to do so. A man is entitled to his own home, and is not to be municipalized into a council tenant. He is entitled to his own doctor, and is not to be compelled to use the National Health Service. He is entitled to his own lawyer, and is not bound to use legal aid. He is entitled to make his own pension and superannuation arrangements, and is not to be forced to rely on a State scheme. He is entitled to send his children to an independent school, and is not obliged to use the facilities of the local education authority. A man is as entitled to buy his

1. *One Nation*. London (Conservative Political Centre) 1950, p. 19.

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wife the comfort of a hospital pay-bed or his son a public school education, as he is to buy his wife a dress or his son a bicycle. Socialists may call this privilege if they will; Conservatives call it economic democracy, and they are very afraid that if a Labour Government succeeded to power some or all of these freedoms would be taken away under the guise of equality.

This would indeed be a reactionary policy in the true sense of the word. For there are good grounds for believing that in an expanding economy, with full employment and fiscal discrimination in favour of the family, we could in this generation lift the standard of living to a level where many of these freedoms could be aspired to and enjoyed by more and more people of working age, and where even within the State-organized services, dependence on State subsidies would grow less and less.

'The privileges of the few', to quote a favourite Socialist expression, could indeed become 'the rights of the many'. Conservatives believe that the right way forward is not through a system of equality, under which the State would provide social services for all, but through a system of equality of opportunity under which men would be free to make self-respecting social provision for themselves as far as their work and their worth allowed, leaving the resources of the State to cope ever more generously with those individuals who cannot provide for themselves and those services which no individual can provide for himself.

Part III. Records and Policies

19. THE INTER-WAR MYTH

WHEN in doubt, runs the old adage, abuse the other fellow's attorney. Although bad advice for advocates, this unfortunately is a very common practice among politicians.

For twenty years now, Socialist propagandists have been constantly and assiduously plugging the legend of 'Tory misrule' during the inter-war years. Between 1939 and 1945, a stream of 'yellow-backs', written by political agitators often posing as ancient Romans, pinned responsibility for the war upon the Conservative Party and, by vilifying the domestic past, pointed the way to the Socialist future. Between 1945 and 1951, when this bright future had turned into a dismal present and Socialist promises were seen to outrun their capacity for government, it became necessary to divert the public mind. But the myth was even intensified and the supposedly credulous young were invited to 'Ask their Dads'. Since 1951 and the growing experience by the public of moderate, modern, and highly successful Conservative administration, the message has become slightly more sophisticated, and the electorate has been admonished to 'keep the Tories tame', that is to say to deny them a large Parliamentary majority, lest they use it, as they would wish, to trigger off a world war, to create mass unemployment, and to destroy the social services. So persistent has been the propaganda that even quite intelligent commentators have seemed to suppose the difference between pre-war and post-war Conservatism to have resulted from a miraculous transformation or a massive confidence-trick, whilst even some Conservatives have tended to look forward to posterity without looking backward to their ancestors, imagining these ancestors to be legitimate objects of scorn and shame.

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I am not seeking in this chapter to whitewash the inter-war years or those who participated in their public life; to suggest that the record of the Conservative Party, any more than that of any other party, in this period was free from error or blame; or to burke the issues raised by appeasement, unemployment, and poverty. I only desire to give an accurate picture, not one which is distorted in either direction; and for this purpose I can call in aid, not merely verifiable statistics and unprejudiced comment, but the remarks of prominent members of the Labour Party themselves in their more responsible, or less guarded, moments.

In 1945 I devoted an entire book to an analysis of the political responsibility for the war and our relative unpreparedness for it when it came. Concerning the culminating issue of Munich and appeasement, upon which I had myself fought a by-election seven years before, I concluded:

The humiliation of Munich was the result of the persistent refusal of successive Governments, of diverse Parties, indeed of the whole nation, to realize from 1929 onwards the menace presented by a re-emergent Germany, or to recognize that British disarmament could only result in British disaster whenever Britain chose at last to assert her traditional policy of the rights of small nations.¹

Exactly the same view, I am glad to recall, was taken by the late Ernest Bevin, the Labour Party's Foreign Secretary after the war, who said in Parliament:

If anyone asks me who was responsible for the British policy leading up to the war, I should, as a Labour man myself, make a confession and say 'All of us'. We refused absolutely to face the facts. When the issue came of arming or rearming millions of people in this country ... we refused to face the real issue at a critical moment. But what is the good of blaming anybody? We cannot make our action retrospective whatever we do.²

But this fair-mindedness has not been reflected in subsequent Socialist discussion, and two additional points must be made if

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 188. 2. 29 July 1941.

the burden of responsibility is to be fairly apportioned. The first is that while in the period of appeasement the Left believed that the dictators were 'only bluffing' (a phrase constantly used against me in the Oxford by-election), the Right believed that it would be wicked to resort to war until it was demonstrated that Hitler's pan-Germanism would not stop at the German-speaking frontiers, and folly to incur it before our defences had been brought into better state. Of these two beliefs the latter was demonstrably the more correct and clear-sighted.

The second point is that between 1935 and 1939 Conservative Ministers did in fact produce arms which, if they were manifestly inadequate, were still enough to stave off defeat, even when, after the collapse of France in 1940, an unexpected emergency arose; and that they did this against the hot political opposition of the Parliamentary Labour Party which as late as six months before the outbreak of war opposed compulsory national service with practically its full strength. Those Socialists who have since been responsible for the cynical falsification of history were those who at the time least espied the essential mischief and most opposed its effective resistance.

They are also those whose vicarious guilt complex about the development of the British Empire might equally have robbed us of victory when war came. 'You have only to look at the pages of British Imperial history to hide your head in shame that you are British',¹ said the late Sir Stafford Cripps, who later added: 'It is fundamental to Socialism that we should liquidate the British Empire as soon as we can'.² Yet it is certain that, in the years that followed, Britain's liberal humanist tradition would not have survived without the Empire. Clive and Wellesley in India, Kitchener, Gordon, Rhodes, and Roberts, these may not be the authors of the ideals for the defence of which we fought against Hitler, though largely they shared them with ourselves. But they are the part-authors of the victory. Where should we have been but for the eighteenth-century bases and trading posts, but for the territory of the East India Company, but for the Indian, and East and West African troops,

1. Bristol, 20 October 1935. 2. Hull, 1 March 1936.

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but for colonial produce and even the manufactures of the tropical territories of the Empire? He who wills the end must will the means. It was the inter-war maintenance of the British Empire, not any Crippsian liquidation, which was a decisive factor in the particular strategic conditions of the last war.

Maintenance, however, did not mean maintenance of the *status quo*, and the suggestion that constitutional and economic development in the Empire were lacking is one of the major absurdities of the inter-war myth. These were the years of the Statute of Westminster, which gave legal effect to the new free and equal relationship between the member states of the Commonwealth defined (in Lord Balfour's vocabulary) at the Imperial Conference of 1926. These were the years of the India Act, under which the first great experiment was made in the gradual transfer of political power from the British to a people of non-European origin. These were years which saw progressive constitutional developments in the Colonies of Gibraltar, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, Zanzibar, Tanganyika, British Guiana, Ceylon, Fiji, and Mauritius. They were also years in which, as Lord Elton's book reminds us, that much ridiculed phrase 'the white man's burden' took on a new significance:

In the nineteen-thirties the Colonial Office set a new precedent. During these years the long-suffering British taxpayer was called upon for twelve million pounds to meet colonial deficits, as well as for the advance of large sums to bankrupt Newfoundland . . . Meanwhile an intense colonial activity sprang up. Education, health, child-welfare, agriculture, nutrition, and land-settlement – against their varying regional backgrounds these problems were studied and attacked anew. Organized campaigns against soil-erosion in Tanganyika and Ceylon, and sleeping-sickness in Nigeria, pasture-improvement in Mauritius and the Falklands, small-holdings in Jamaica, and new Education Departments in Aden and Somaliland – such were some of the first fruits of the government's reviving energy. The development of secondary industries was encouraged. A growing body of trade union and industrial welfare legislation began to appear upon the statute book at Westminster, and in the dependencies. And who was to finance reform? . . . The main

burden, it was clear, must be shouldered once more by the British taxpayer.¹

Finally, they were the years in which Neville Chamberlain realized his father's dream, and achieved in the Ottawa agreements of 1932 the principle of Imperial Preference and the stimulation of Empire trade.

The Ottawa agreements were a child of the inter-war economic depression which swept the world, and, so far as they went, their philosophy was sound. Faced with an international trade contracting for reasons partly beyond their control, and partly outside the comprehension even of the professional economists, the Governments of the Commonwealth sought assured markets. This instinct was partly but not wholly restrictionist: they thought expansion would come when trade had been established on the solid foundation of assured markets. The practical results were impressive. Between 1932 and 1938 United Kingdom exports to the Empire increased by 36 per cent, exports to foreign countries by 18, imports from the Empire increased by 50, from foreign sources by 20. There are good grounds for claiming that the tariff and preference policy, which in one form or another had been championed by the Conservative Party for a generation, had a more beneficial effect on our economy (and on our unemployment figures, which were essentially dependent on the condition of international trade) than any other governmental measure of the inter-war period:

Throughout 1932 the volume of production and exports continued to fall rapidly in France, Germany, and the United States: in Britain it failed to rise but it ceased to fall. We rose from the third to the first place in the list of exporters and were the first to profit by the general turn of the tide which began in 1933.²

No analysis of the social conditions of this period could reasonably minimize the grievous blot of mass unemployment. What Conservatives deny is not the fact, nor its grievousness, but the views about the nature of the cause and the means of its remedy to which the Labour Party has from time to

1. *Imperial Commonwealth*. London (Collins) 1945, pp. 509-10.

2. D. C. Somerell, *British Politics since 1900*. London (Dakers) 1953, pp. 202-3.

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time committed itself. In its 1945 Election Manifesto *Let us Face the Future*, it laid the blame on the deliberate malevolence of the 'hard-faced men who had done well out of the war' and who with 'their political friends, kept control of the Government'. This melodramatic libel – the lineal descendant of the fantastic election story that the 1931 economic crisis was nothing but a 'bankers' ramp' designed to get rid of an unpopular Labour Government – is obviously inconsistent with the tragic loss to the profit-seeker and the businessman which in the prolonged depression accompanied the human tragedy of unemployment. It is even more obviously inconsistent with the plain fact that the so-called 'political friends' of the so-called hard-faced men proved a good deal more successful in reducing unemployment than their self-appointed enemies. The numbers of registered unemployed fell from 1,228,000 in November 1924 when the Conservative Government assumed office to 982,000 in April 1926 just before the General Strike, and fell again from 1,613,000 in May 1926 after the General Strike to 1,118,000 in June 1929. For every two men unemployed when the Socialists entered office in that month, there were five men unemployed by the time they left office in August 1931. The figure was then 2,762,000. Eight years later, on the eve of the war, it had fallen under the National Government to less than half, 1,232,000. From the vantage-point of our increased knowledge their finance may look too orthodox and their rationalization of production too restrictionist, but diversification of industry through the trading estates in the depressed areas and stimulation of Empire trade were sound policies as far as they went, and they were not without effect.

The familiar Socialist excuse for their own lamentable performance between 1929 and 1931 is that they were then in office but, lacking an overall majority, not in power; that genuine Socialist measures could have coped effectively with the unemployment problem; but that as long as they were obliged to work the capitalist system their hands were tied, since it is an inherent vice of capitalism that it depends upon the existence of a 'pool of labour' over and above the requirements of 'full employment'.

Now it is perfectly true that in a *free* society one hundred per cent efficiency in the labour budget is not possible. There will always be men dissatisfied with their jobs, employers dissatisfied with their men, firms being wound up, types of business being closed down, new techniques and fashions which involve redundancy and mobility of labour, and other changes, large or small. A certain amount of unemployment in this sense is no doubt inevitable; it could be avoided, at a price, only by a Government prepared to set itself Canute-like against the forces of economic progress. But the crisis which was encountered in the inter-war years could certainly not be explained in these terms, or indeed in national terms at all. In the sixty years before the First World War capitalism never produced such a crisis: our unemployment then averaged about 4 per cent and at times dropped to 2 per cent. In the inter-war years, however, it averaged about 14 per cent and was scarcely ever lower than 10 per cent. Unemployment on this scale was wholly foreign to the settled conditions of later Victorian and Edwardian capitalist Britain, made its appearance after the dislocation caused by the First World War, and was essentially a malady not of the internal construction of the country but of international trade.

That this is so may be seen from the fact that the two countries which most completely solved their unemployment problems – Russia and Germany – both adopted artificially closed economies with economic lock gates isolating them from free contact with the world of international trade. It is, of course, always worth admitting that unemployment is specifically a malady of free countries. Totalitarian countries (in which I include democratic countries in war conditions) do not need to suffer from unemployment, except in the sense that a great number of their people are employed in non-productive, or directly destructive, work. In Lord Beveridge's words:

The doubt is not as to the possibility of achieving full employment but as to the possibility of achieving it without the surrender of other things that are even more precious.¹

1. *Full Employment in a Free Society*. London (Allen & Unwin) 1944, p. 249.

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In so far as 'genuine Socialist remedies' in the inter-war years would have involved bartering our liberties for the specious glitter of totalitarian autarky Conservatives were *right* to reject them. In so far as they would have fallen short of this – as presumably they would – they would have failed, exactly as they failed in the immediate post-war years, when, despite the nationalization of basic industries and the availability of the whole apparatus of war-time control, we were saved from mass unemployment only through the charity of capitalist America. The late Sir Stafford Cripps surely pronounced the death-knell of the argument that unemployment is an inherent vice of capitalism to be cured by democratic Socialism when at the height of the Labour Party's tenure of power, as well as office, he admitted:

It has been estimated that without Marshall Aid something like 1,500,000 might have been thrown out of work for lack of raw materials, unless we had all accepted a very much lower standard of living, too low to allow us to produce efficiently.¹

Whilst I am on this topic I desire to say something about the principles and practice of the so-called 'means test', since no reference by Socialists to inter-war unemployment is complete without a gibe at its iniquities. This is in itself sufficiently remarkable, since the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law published in 1909, which was signed by both George Lansbury and Beatrice Webb, clearly laid down the principle of a household means test in regard to poor relief, and since the Labour Cabinet in August 1931 had provisionally agreed to impose such a test for those who had exhausted their right to unemployment benefit. What is more, they were perfectly correct to insist that in dealing with public money of any sort politicians have no right to be careless, and that, if being generous means failing to take precautions against abuse, politicians have no right to be generous at other people's expense. The scheme eventually imposed by the National Government may have been too rigid and often rough in application, but this was better than being lax, weak, and intellectually dis-

1. London, 7 July 1948.

honest. Conservatives are no more to blame for the shortcomings than the railway company of 1828 was to be blamed for failing to take twentieth-century precautions and so avert the death of the lamented Mr Huskisson. The fact that we have now been able since 1941 to go forward on the basis of the system evolved in the thirties to a more generous system of benefits, administered by more flexible rules, is very largely due to the fact that Conservatives had heads as well as hearts, and being pioneers were strong-minded enough to avoid abuses and to walk warily, although every temptation was to act in quite another way.

The fact is that despite 'means tests' and other controversial subjects the inter-war years were years of revolutionary social improvement. By 1942 Lord Beveridge, who can surely be called as an independent witness, was able to report as follows:

The first task of the Committee has been to attempt for the first time a comprehensive survey of the whole field of Social Insurance and other services, to show just what provision is now being made and how it is made for different forms of need. . . . The picture presented is impressive in two ways. *First it shows that the provision for most of the many varieties of need through interruption of earnings and other causes that may arise in modern industrial communities has already been made in Britain on a scale not surpassed and hardly rivalled in any other country of the world.* In one respect only of the first importance, namely limitation of medical service . . . does Britain's achievement fall seriously short of what has been accomplished elsewhere; it falls short also in its provision of a cash benefit for maternity and funerals, and, through defects of its system, for workmen's compensation. *In all other fields, British provision for security, in adequacy of amount and in comprehensiveness, will stand comparison with that of any other country. Few countries will stand comparison with Britain.'*

He then went on to discuss the inevitable weaknesses which accompany a system which has grown up piecemeal, and the need to increase benefits (and contributions) in order to make them more adequate. Conservatives will not wish to differ from

1. Beveridge Report, Cmd. 6404. London (H.M.S.O.), December 1942, pp. 5-6.

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his view that, 'Want could have been abolished before the present war', but instead of regarding this as an indictment they will point with some pride to the two facts that, as a result of thirty-odd years of progress, civilization had actually come, under capitalism, within striking distance of abolishing want for the first time since the world began, and that the pioneering work in the methods which have proved themselves most beneficial for this purpose was largely done in the very years which Conservatives are asked to accept as years of shame and humiliation.

Nor can one allow the criticism of our inter-war medical and maternity provision to pass, without at the same time recording the unexampled progress in the prevailing standards of health and nutrition. These were the years when local authorities throughout the country were required by statute to establish an adequate service of salaried and trained midwives, when the scheme for milk in schools was started and provision of free meals in schools greatly extended, and when for the first time grants were made available for the provision of physical training and recreation as an essential part of a child's schooling. During these inter-war years the number of mothers dying in childbirth dropped from about 5 to less than 3 per 1,000 births, the expectation of life of a new-born child rose by no fewer than nine years, and new entrants to the elementary schools in London gained an average of two inches in height and five pounds in weight compared with 1914. More than one independent source can be quoted to substantiate the inter-war improvements in health and physique, but for obvious reasons I prefer to quote the Labour Party's own official statement of policy, *The Nation's Food - Labour's Nutrition Policy*, published in 1943. This said :

There was, in spite of unemployment, a rise in the standard of living which enabled a larger proportion of the population to purchase a diet adequate for health. The national diet rapidly improved. The average consumption of the protective foods increased by roughly 50 per cent between 1914 and 1939.

This improvement in the diet was accompanied by a corresponding improvement in national health. The grosser forms of diseases due

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to inadequate food, such as rickets, had almost completely disappeared. The same was true of scurvy in infants and of xerophthalmia (sore eyes) in schoolchildren. Children leaving school were between two and three inches taller than their parents at the same age, and the infant mortality rate, and tuberculosis death rate, which are both profoundly affected by the state of nutrition of the people, had fallen by about 50 per cent.

The Report of the Chief Medical Officer to the Ministry of Health in 1938 singled out another important factor in the declining incidence of tuberculosis, namely the great improvement which took place in the housing of the people during the previous twenty years. The Annual Report of the Ministry of Health for the year 1938-9 summarized the achievement of these years, which was due to the pioneering work of Neville Chamberlain and his successors :

Four million houses have now been built since the end of the war, compared with the eight millions which existed before that date. Each of the last five years has seen the erection of over 300,000 houses—a total of 1,500,000, which equals the complete rebuilding of the six great cities of Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, and Leeds. The average number of persons per house has fallen from 5·4 at the beginning of the century to 3·5 to-day. Slum clearance and the abatement of overcrowding have both made rapid progress; over a million men, women, and children have been moved from the slums and the overcrowding disclosed by the survey of 1936 has already been reduced by a quarter. It would be hard to overestimate the effect of these changes in terms of human welfare.

That the standard of living rose steadily between the wars is graphically illustrated by the fact that well over two million families were able to buy their own homes, that the number of telephones installed more than trebled, and that in the last seven years alone the number of motor vehicles licensed increased by a million.

I conclude this chapter by summarizing what I believe to be the true position. In none of my analyses of conditions between the wars have I sought to deny the gruesome facts of Want, Disease, Ignorance, Idleness, and Squalor — to use the names of the five giants which Lord Beveridge espied across the path of

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post-war reconstruction. In none have I sought to dissuade anyone from the urgent task of settling to tackle these immemorial conditions of human life. The Conservative agrees with the Socialist entirely when he preaches against these things; he is with him wholeheartedly when he inflames people with a desire and determination to attack and remove them. But he cannot accept the charge that capitalism is responsible. On the contrary, these giant evils are, in fact, part of the primeval slime from which it is the business of civilization to emancipate itself, and capitalism, with all its positive faults, and far more numerous limitations, has proved by its capacity to create wealth the greatest emancipating influence in all the hundred and twenty-five thousand years since the first human remains began to lie among the bones and mud.

We must improve the work of our fathers. We must stand on our fathers' shoulders. We must not deride, decry, or scrap their work. That way is not progress, but retrogression, and part of that way is to turn our backs on the period between the wars as irredeemably bad years, whose badness was brought about by the wickedness of the Governments our people elected. The truth is that these were years of solid and even spectacular progress in almost every direction connected with the well-being of the people, progress so substantial that it was even able to counterbalance the internationally induced slump and unemployment which was their most grievous blot. Nor is there any country, capitalist or socialist, whose own achievement during those years is on the whole so satisfactory as ours. So far as we can judge, the only justifiable basis for the indictment which is commonly made is that throughout this period the social conscience on all these matters was developing at an even faster rate than the pedestrian progress of actual legislation and government could follow.

20. SOCIALISM IN PRACTICE

THE proverbial shortness and fallibility of human memory, and the capacity of time to heal all but the deepest wounds, are among the conditions which make life most tolerable for the individual. They are also a great boon to certain political parties, who are thus enabled to persuade the electorate that it might prove more congenial to lie on its left side than on its right, since the electorate may only too rapidly have forgotten how the last time it tried lying on its left side it suffered almost unspeakable discomfort of body and mind.

It is not easy now, even for those of us who live our lives in the atmosphere of political controversy, to project ourselves backwards in time from Conservative freedom and abundance to the austerities and absurdities of Labour's planned economy. But the yellowing pages of old newspaper clippings can help. I am therefore obliged to the talented journalist who in March 1958 conducted his readers quickly and at random through the columns of his newspaper ten years previously. The result was not without its entertainment value: it was also instructive.

On Saturday, March 6, 1948, the *Daily Telegraph* consisted of four pages. The clothes ration, it reported, was to be cut.

On March 8 we learnt that 'the allocation of leather for boot and shoe repairs is to remain unchanged at 62½ per cent of the basic commitment' – whatever that might be. Ryvita, at one point per packet, was more plentiful. Public dinners were limited to 100 people.

March 10 was a day of horror. Headlines read: '1948 YEAR OF ANXIETY: WARNING TO NATION: DRASTIC NEW CUTS IF U.S. AID FAILS: THREAT TO EMPLOYMENT AND LIVING STANDARDS: EXPORT TARGET REDUCED: DWINDLING RESERVES: DROP OF £222,000,000: RATIONS ENDANGERED: EXPORTS HELD UP BY STEEL SHORTAGE: POWER PROBLEMS: STAGGERING NECESSARY: OIL SHORTAGE: SHORTAGE OF FODDER.'

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On March 11 the price of all-elastic utility braces was reduced and 1 lb. of sugar released for jam-making.

On March 12 Mrs Jean Mann said that opions were unobtainable in Glasgow, and bananas were being sold by spivs at 10s. a lb. Mr Strachey expressed his confidence in the groundnut scheme.

On March 13 it was reported that newsprint supplies were dwindling, and that British appetites caused 'alarm' in France.

On March 15 an American charity announced that Britain was now the worst-fed nation in Europe bar one.

On March 17 Mr Strachey defended bread rationing, and confessed himself 'very nervous' about fruit prospects.

On March 20 the trade expected a 1 lb. cut in the potato ration.

On March 22 the home quota of whisky – already lower than ever before – was cut.

On March 27 the cheese ration was cut from 2 oz. to 1½ oz. And so on.

What a fantastic world it was – a mad, murky prison in which Kafka-trained bureaucrats distributed to drab, shuffling inmates ever-diminishing supplies of shoe leather, potatoes and – at Christmas – dried fruit. After the next election, shall we have to live through it all again? ¹

Socialists would much prefer us to forget just how fantastic life became under their administration, but the next best thing to forgetting is forgiving – and they hope to be forgiven on the grounds that they inherited, and were supposed to be struggling manfully throughout their tenure of office with, inevitable post-war difficulties. But how much truth is there in this explanation or excuse?

It is perfectly true that the effect of the war and the consequent dislocation of international trade was bound to be particularly severe on a country in Britain's unique position. We had been in the front line from the very beginning. We had suffered a loss of physical assets estimated at some £5,000 million. We had been forced to liquidate many of our foreign investments in the course of the war, and our income from them had been halved, whilst at the same time we had incurred tremendous liabilities to other countries, principally in the

1. *Daily Telegraph*, 7 March 1958.

sterling area. Thus from being the world's biggest creditor, we had been transformed into a nation heavily in debt.

For these and other reasons it must have been apparent to any intelligent and responsible person in the early days of peace that the problems facing Britain would be serious and not necessarily short-lived. But this was not the view of those who were then elected to guide the destinies of the nation – as Sir Richard Acland, himself a Socialist, pointed out: 'Of their many mistakes, the biggest the Labour Party has made is that they were too optimistic in 1945. Though warnings were uttered by some of their leaders the total impression of all their propaganda was that we were on the brink of a wonderful comfortable and cosy time all round'¹ – and clearly it was not the view of their ebullient Chancellor of the Exchequer, Dr Dalton, who, in a poetic but otherwise quite characteristic fit of optimism, prophesied:

If we keep going together as we have since VJ day, shortages and frustrations which still afflict us will disappear like the snows of winter and give place to the full promise of springtime.²

It is, of course, part of the Conservative case that Dr Dalton's ridiculous euphoria was a factor in perpetuating and worsening the shortages and frustrations of which he spoke; my argument, however, is that his prophecy might well have been at least partially fulfilled if the conduct of public affairs had not been in the keeping of incompetent doctrinaires.

For, if Britain had many problems and difficulties to contend with after the war, she also had many compensating advantages. There were, first of all, the opportunities of the sellers' market. For long we enjoyed an abnormal post-war demand for goods of all kinds and an absence of competition from Germany and Japan. This meant that almost anything we produced we could sell. Then there were the enormous sums we received from the United States and the nations of the Commonwealth by way of gifts and loans and Marshall Aid, intended expressly to tide us over our temporary troubles, and amounting altogether to over £2,200 million. Most important of all, there was

1. Gravesend, 14 February 1948. 2. Portsmouth, 19 October 1946.

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the continuing spirit of national unity which had made so great a contribution to war-time victory and could have contributed no less to peace-time effort.

It requires little elaborate demonstration to prove how the last of these assets was recklessly destroyed by words and attitudes of partisan malice. A few days after the new Parliament had assembled, the late Arthur Greenwood made what might have been thought a conciliatory if self-flattering speech to the House of Commons:

I claim that we are really a national Party. I look round among my colleagues and I see landlords, capitalists, and lawyers. We are a cross-section of the national life, and this is something which has never happened before . . . we shall do our best to retain the respect and affection which we have gained in many quarters of our country.¹

But it was too much to hope. The election had been fought on this very issue, and the Labour Party had been the organization which successfully resisted national policy. The whole ethos and tradition of the Labour Party had been based on the differences and injustices which divide us; and within months we were hearing from the lips of exultant Cabinet Ministers that they were the *masters* now,² that nobody but the organized workers mattered 'a tinker's cuss', or alternatively 'two hoots',³ and that, as for the Tories, they were 'lower than vermin'.⁴

The whole shape of their calamitous housing policy with its deliberate penalization of the would-be private owner, the whole process of expropriating industrial assets, usually with arbitrarily fixed and inadequate compensation, and the whole bias of Socialist taxation with its swingeing surtax and capital levy, fitted into this atmosphere of class war. There is no need to sentimentalize over the rich. That is not the point. The point is that the real motive underlying these transactions was not to

1. 7 August, 1945.

2. Sir Hartley (now Lord) Shawcross, House of Commons, 2 April 1946.

3. Mr Shinwell, Margate, 7 and 25 May 1947.

4. Mr Bevan, Manchester, 4 July 1948.

advantage the poor, but to take people's minds off their own sufferings by giving them other people's sufferings to enjoy. And that is sadism.

There are many people in this country worse off than they were before the war. But we always intended they should be. We never said the Labour Government would be good to everyone.¹

When Mr Bevan, in an excess of candour, made this admission he gave the lie direct to Arthur Greenwood's earlier claim that the Labour Party had become a national Party, branded Socialism as an essentially divisive force, and showed how the Labour Government was prepared to throw away the war-time unity which could have proved one of its precious peace-time assets.

As for the benefits of the sellers' market and of external aid, they were in large part wasted by the disastrous mismanagement of our finances. Dr Dalton's policy was well designed to cure unemployment at a time when the nation was in fact suffering from a shortage of manpower. By misguidedly allowing free convertibility of sterling in the summer of 1947, he lost the nation the use of some £300 million of the American loan. Sir Stafford Cripps's policy of draconian austerity was designed to undo the damage that Dr Dalton had done, but when a mild recession in the United States occurred in 1949 our economy was still so unstable that the pound had to be devalued by 30 per cent. Mr Gaitskell's short tenure of the Exchequer was marked by the most savage Budget since the war, and was terminated by the most severe balance of payments crisis in living memory. At the root of these recurrent crises which rocked the country every alternate year was the lack of a financial policy which would adjust the flood of demand to the supply of goods and labour available. Failing to curb either credit or Government expenditure, the Socialists permitted and intensified an inflation which cut the value of the pound by nearly six shillings in six years.

These six years were, however, to my mind, most remarkable politically for the complete and devastating failure of the

1. Coventry, 5 July 1947.

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characteristically *Socialist* policies which the Labour Party had been peddling in and out of season ever since its inception. The first of these policies it calls 'planning'; the second of these policies it used to call 'nationalization' but now likes to refer to by some such periphrasis as 'public ownership' or 'social ownership'. Upon these two policies, it is necessary at this point that I should offer some general as well as some specific observations.

One of the biggest swindles ever put across the people by a political Party is the Labour claim to be the only Party which believes in planning, and to have the only possible plan as an alternative to 'the chaos which would follow the end of all [*sic*] public control'.¹ The truth is that all parties to-day believe in some kind of planning, since all parties reject the classic doctrine of *laissez faire*.

The *laissez faire* theory left the development of economic policy and affairs 'unplanned' in the fullest sense of the word, since it held that, once the State had prescribed some Queensberry rules for the boxing match of competition, it was the business of statesmen to leave the ring, and that anyone who remained inside it, barring the umpire, was liable to get hurt. Interference by the State in economic development and progress was always wrong – unless, perhaps, undertaken in the interests of military security – and conscious 'planning', that is, the achievement by deliberate State action of permanent healthy economic activities really beneficial to the community at large, was not so much undesirable as actually impossible, since such activities were either capable of succeeding in the fight for existence, in which case interference was unnecessary, or they were not, in which case the activities were not healthy.

If the choice which lay before the electorate were between this theory, much truth as Conservatives have always seen in it, and Socialism, which, as Conservatives also admit, contains much truth, the electorate might be pardonably forgiven for preferring Socialism. On the whole a philosophy which claims for humanity some ability to control its own destiny is a more healthy form of heresy, even where it is a heresy, than one

1. *Let us Face the Future*, p. 2.

which, however near the truth, denies, like Calvinism, any scope for the exercise of free will.

But such is not the choice presented by modern Conservatism. *Laissez faire* economics were never orthodox Conservative teaching, and Conservatives have only begun to defend them when there appears to be a danger of society swinging too far to the other extreme.

Conservatives do not oppose Socialist planning with 'the chaos that would follow the end of all public control'. The Conservative Party remains the traditional party of authority even though it has become the defender of the principle of liberty. Conservatism teaches that economic life can be just as much the subject of conscious and deliberate planning, in the sense of a conscious and intelligent shaping of events, as foreign policy or military strategy. Conservative planning implies that Government should advertise and prescribe certain general economic objectives, and impose certain general standards of quality, should use its immense influence and power to encourage industry to cooperate to those ends, should interfere only where it has become obvious that a serious breakdown in a commonly accepted objective has taken place, and should, in the broad, refrain from taking powers to punish where individuals choose for their own reasons to pursue their own ends, provided these are honest and in conformity with 'natural law'. But Conservatives deny that in order to achieve this measure of control it is necessary or desirable to adopt a Socialist 'plan', that is, a plan which demands the concentration of all power, political and economic, in the hands of a central Government and prescribes, at least in general, for each individual or class of individuals the part they must play in the planned society.

Conservatives reject this kind of 'planning' on two grounds: the theoretical ground, to which earlier reference has been made, that the diffusion of power is a condition of liberty, and the quite practical ground that in a complex society such as ours, dependent on international trade, an administration staffed by archangels could not know enough about every facet of our national life to be able to exercise intelligent, detailed,

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and positive control. It is not only insufferable to imagine that 'the gentleman in Whitehall really does know better what is good for people than the people know themselves'¹; it is also demonstrably untrue. There is no one who lived through these years who cannot call to mind out of his own experience some instance in which the combination of unfettered power and inadequate knowledge produced ludicrous results. My own particular favourite was the well-authenticated case of the export licence for specimens of a hornless breed of cattle being granted on the condition that brass registration plates were attached to the animals' horns. But from such humorous recollections, one must turn to the melancholy contemplation of Socialist 'planning' on the really big scale. I shall give three examples.

Soon after the 1945 election, it became obvious that there was a danger of grain shortage before the harvest of 1946. This indeed was a chance for a Government of 'planners'. One would have thought that here, if ever, a Socialist administration, facing the future, would have announced that the war-time arable policy must continue for another year, and that instead of putting down arable to grass, war-time acreages of wheat must be sown that autumn. This would have been the policy and plan of a Conservative Minister of Agriculture. Unfortunately this was not done, and the omission had two disastrous results. In the first place, an insufficient acreage of autumn wheat – the heaviest crop – was sown, and in the second place, the farmers were allowed to commit themselves to purchases of cattle and poultry, which at a later date they were compelled, for lack of feeding stuffs, to slaughter at considerable financial loss. This, among other things, led to a smaller meat ration and the imposition of bread rationing for the first time in British history.

Then in the summer of 1946 the Government was warned that coal stocks were becoming so low that a fuel and power breakdown might occur during the winter months. Here again was an opportunity for a Government of 'planners', then intent on the nationalization of the industry, to accumulate adequate stocks as a provision against the hazards of winter. Not only

1. Douglas Jay, *The Socialist Case*. London (Faber) 1947, p. 260.

was this not done, but the responsible Minister deliberately ignored and repeatedly ridiculed these warnings, subsequently appearing to blame his civil servants for having given him inadequate information. The consequences were calamitous. A quarter of the country's industry was brought to a standstill; more than two million people were thrown out of work; and £200 million's worth of exports were lost. For hours during the day homes and offices were without heat or light, and at night the black-out returned to the streets. The B.B.C. made drastic cuts in its programmes, the cinemas shut down during the day, and the weekly Press disappeared.

These are two classic examples of a Government, armed with every kind of physical control failing by sheer incompetence and human fallibility to make practical plans at all. My third example is of a grandiose plan hustled forward in order to achieve political credit (its main object was to increase the fats ration), and becoming in the end a monument of ineptitude and mismanagement. In February 1947 this plan, for the mechanized production of groundnuts in East and Central Africa, was presented to Parliament with a flourish of trumpets. It was described by Mr Strachey, the Socialist Food Minister, as bearing comparison in importance with the allied landings in North Africa in 1942, and the *Daily Herald* took the occasion to chastise the wicked Tories for leaving it to a Labour Government to develop the economic and human potentialities of the Empire. The original plan visualized the planting of over three million acres at a cost of £24 million. By the end of 1949 only about 100,000 acres had been cleared and planted at a cost of £30 million. The Committee of Public Accounts reporting on it said:

'The basic fault in the scheme was the failure to realize the impracticability of the original plans in the conditions which existed immediately after the war. An immense development and production drive was set on foot at a time when nothing but second-hand plant and machinery was available and before a balanced administrative financial and accounting system had been created which could bear the weight of the initial surge of expenditure.'¹

1. May 1950, para. 34.

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The scheme in anything remotely like its original form was eventually abandoned at the beginning of 1951, an abandonment involving the writing off of approximately £36½ million.

These are the memories which cause one, according to one's mood or temperament, either to shudder with apprehension or to choke with merriment when one reads on the very first page of Labour's newest policy statement, in Mr Gaitskell's introduction:

This pamphlet outlines the plans which the next Labour Government will turn into reality. The plans are carefully thought out. They are practical as well as inspiring. They are democratic Socialism in action.¹

Democratic Socialism in action! – but so were Dr Dalton's convertibility crisis, and Sir Stafford Cripps's devaluation crisis, and Mr Gaitskell's own balance of payments crisis, and Mr Williams's feeding stuffs crisis, and Mr Shinwell's fuel crisis, and Mr Strachey's groundnut fiasco. They were all democratic Socialism in action. They were all perpetrated by the Government which had grandiloquently promised that 'we are not going to be caught unawares by blind economic forces under this administration',² and was in fact so caught and buffeted about by them, through lack of foresight or through plain downright folly, on more occasions and at greater cost in money and misery than the exigencies of space will permit me to recall.

Now I turn to public ownership; and once again it is necessary first of all to rescue this phrase from its doctrinaire context. Conservatives believe as a general rule in private enterprise as the best way of running industry and agriculture in this country, but this does not mean that they adhere to a pedantic belief in private ownership in every conceivable case or to an unyielding opposition to public ownership in every particular case.

Conservatives, for example, are perfectly content to see postal services and telecommunications run by the State, even

1. *The Future Labour Offers You* (November 1958).

2. Mr Herbert Morrison, Labour Party Conference, Bournemouth, 13 June 1946.

though in some other countries the telephone service is either wholly or partially in private hands. They approved the nationalization of mining royalties and of tithes, which for different reasons had become a nuisance in private hands – the former because they interfered with the technical lay-out of coal mines, the latter because they no longer formed an equitable impost on property. Again, Conservatives have devised or supported the institution of various public trading corporations for the performance of different public objects, an early example of which was the Central Electricity Board set up under the Act of 1926, which my father piloted through the House of Commons. Like all other sensible people, Conservatives believe that there are a number of public utilities and local services which can as well be undertaken, and sometimes better undertaken, by municipal bodies as by private firms, and other public utilities which require to be run by public authorities over areas not coincident with local boundaries, such as the Metropolitan Water Board. Finally, Conservatives are hardly likely to forget that it was Disraeli himself who encouraged the purchase by the Government of a minority shareholding in a private profit-making concern, the Suez Canal Company; and there are other, more recent precedents for State shareholding being arranged under Conservative auspices.

Extremists would no doubt accuse Conservative Ministers of being 'pink' for having done these things; but those who did them were nearer the true Conservative tradition than their critics. It was the Liberals who believed in the essentially unbalanced theory of *laissez faire*. Conservatives have always sought progress along *The Middle Way*, and in a book of this name Mr Harold Macmillan, who can scarcely be accused of heresy now, whatever was true then, listed a variety of forms of Conservative public ownership existing in 1938 – a list which would to-day require both revision and extension.

Where Conservatives differ fundamentally and passionately from Socialists is in denying that public ownership can ever be more than a limited device or that it can ever be held out as valid, let alone as a panacea, for industry generally. Socialists, in their view, are in the same predicament as the man in Stephen

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Leacock's epigram who, having fallen in love with a dimple, made the grave mistake of marrying the whole girl. Because one established commercial transaction is well conducted by the State, it does not follow that the State is best fitted to conduct other commercial transactions, dependent as they may be upon expertise, flexibility, and risk. Because certain private rights required at one time to be extinguished it does not follow that private property generally should be artificially delimited or savagely persecuted. Because Governments have, for historical and often strategic reasons, acquired a shareholding in a few private companies, it does not follow that they should prod their fingers down into the boardrooms of all the biggest firms in the land, manufacturing, distributing, and retailing. Because public corporations and municipal bodies have proved useful in the running of certain public utilities, it does not follow that all or the greater part of the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be nationalized.

Conservatives oppose the wide extension or wholesale application of nationalization upon four main grounds. The first, to which I have referred in discussing Socialist 'planning', is their belief in the diffusion of economic power, and their anxiety not to subordinate industrial policy to irrelevant political pressures and influences. The second, which I have discussed in Chapter 15, is their positive belief in the system of free competitive enterprise as the one most productive of wealth. The third ground is their negative belief that State monopoly can only too easily stifle economic progress. As Mr Peter Thorneycroft observed during the course of a classic exposition of this argument on the second reading of the Labour Government's Transport Bill:

The great evil of monopoly is that it will stabilize, or tend to stabilize, the transport system of the country. There is a sort of tendency in all generations to think that they have reached the final stage in industrial and technical development. All history will not teach them the vanity of their conceit. In point of fact, it is only within a comparatively small space of years that we have seen stage coaches replaced by a great development of the railway system, the invention of the internal combustion engine, tar macadam,

road competition, and the beginnings of civil aviation. Immense developments, it is true, but that is only the beginning and not the end of the story. Suppose that before the story started there had been a transport commission looking after the railways. Imagine the attitude of those great Victorian commissioners who, when the first gentleman was walking along a dusty road with a red flag, were asked for permission to create a road haulage system. Think of the contempt and scorn that would have been poured upon them, particularly if it had been State capital involved rather than private capital. What chance would there have been of these developments which, with all their problems, have been of inestimable benefit in creating the wealth and prosperity of this country.¹

The fourth and final ground upon which Conservatives oppose the extension of nationalization is grim experience of the results of the nationalization undertaken between 1945 and 1951. Rarely has experience so swiftly exploded the pretended virtues of a panacea. It was supposed that nationalization, preached by the Labour Party for half a century, had been the object of detailed and methodical study emerging in blueprints. Nothing, as Mr Shinwell revealed, was further from the truth:

There was far too little detailed preparation in nationalization, and we found ourselves with legislation that had to be completed without the necessary blueprints.²

Minister after Minister, presenting nationalization measures to the House of Commons, had to confess ignorance of the ultimate set-up, taking example from the artist in *Don Quixote* who, being asked what it was he was painting, replied modestly, 'That is as it may turn out.' It did not turn out well - either for the taxpayer, the consumer, or the worker.

The taxpayer will look at the financial results. He will see that the nationalized industries as a whole are now well over £200 million 'in the red', that coal and transport have heavy cumulative deficits, that only electricity and gas are making a profit, and that not one of them is genuinely paying its way. 'Not one of them is paying its way', writes Sir Oscar Hobson, the economist, 'in the sense that it is earning a surplus of

1. *Hansard*, 18 December 1946.

2. *Edinburgh*, 2 May 1948.

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revenue over expenditure sufficient to provide for full maintenance of the assets and to pay interest on its capital.'¹

The consumer will look first and foremost at the prices charged. He will see that, despite the exemption of the nationalized industries from the normal commercial obligations to make a profit, and despite the political pressures that have been exercised upon them (particularly upon the National Coal Board) to keep prices down, the price of coal had by the beginning of 1959 risen 42 per cent more than the general rise in prices since nationalization; rail freights 38 per cent more; gas 19 per cent more; and only rail fares and electricity very slightly less. As for consumer protection through the special advisory bodies established by the Socialist statutes, he will not need to go the whole of the way with the Socialist journal *Tribune* - 'We all know that the present Consumer Councils are a wash-out'² - to observe that they leave something to be desired.

Finally, on the position of the worker in the nationalized industries, Conservatives will be content to call in evidence that most authoritative and well-versed of Left-wing sociological pundits Mr Antony Crosland, who recently wrote:

The experience of such diverse countries as Britain and Israel, Sweden and Australia, has been that the mere fact of public ownership has little effect on industrial relations. The reason is obvious. Industrial morale depends primarily on local conditions, frictions, and relationships; and these do not necessarily alter merely because at the national or industry level the shareholders are replaced by a public board.

Nor does formal joint consultation appear to be the panacea. The British nationalized industries all have elaborate machinery for joint consultation; yet as judged by the number of strikes, the rate of absenteeism, or productivity, this seems to have made little difference to the behaviour or morale of the workers (generally those industries which had good relations before have good relations now; those which had bad relations still have bad relations).³

In this chapter I have purposely refrained from examining or criticizing in detail the overseas, as distinct from the domestic,

1. *News Chronicle*, 29 January 1958.

2. 19 July 1957.

3. *Encounter*, February 1959.

SOCIALISM IN PRACTICE

policies of the Labour Government. This is not because Conservatives do not find much to criticize in these policies too. They believe, in particular, that the Labour Government mis-managed our defence effort, that it did culpably little to avoid or minimize the violence and bloodshed which accompanied the constitutional changes in India and Burma, that its policy in the Middle East from Palestine to Abadan was vacillating and ultimately dishonourable, and that its attitude to European unity was weak and half-hearted. If they absolve the Labour Government's international policy from the same sweeping condemnation which they make of its domestic policy, it is because, despite the pacifists and fellow-travellers at their backs, its members refused, in facing the main international challenge of Communism, to be hampered by ideological prepossessions.

Mr Bevin had said during the election campaign :

Russia would deal better and with greater confidence with a Labour Government than with the men of Munich. Left can speak to Left in comradeship and confidence.¹

It was not so: and it is to Mr Bevin's credit that he realized this quickly and when most of his Party were disposed to be blind to the facts; just as it is to Lord Attlee's credit that, faced with mutiny in his own ranks, he could say :

In all these matters it must be remembered that we are not acting as the representatives of an ideological abstraction, but as representatives of the people of this country. Some of my hon. friends are disturbed because the foreign policy of the Government is supported on various points by hon. members opposite. How could it be otherwise? ²

If Labour had shown as much freedom from doctrinal prejudice in its economic and social policies, its inherent incompetence might still not have allowed it to succeed, but at least it might have avoided going down to history as one of the worst British administrations of modern times.

1. Shipley, 7 June 1945.

2. *Hansard*, 18 November 1946.

21. CONSERVATIVE ACHIEVEMENT

THE electoral defeat of 1945 impelled the Conservative Party to rethink its philosophy and re-form its ranks with a thoroughness unmatched since the days of Disraeli. The avuncular genius of Lord Woolton and the thorough work of the Maxwell Fyfe Committee improved the Party machine, put it upon a more popular footing, and infused into it a spirit of comradeship and zeal.

Tory democracy was given a broader basis. The financial relationship of candidates and members with their constituency associations was rigorously defined: 'It seems evident that questions of finance now play a less important rôle in the adoption of Conservative candidates than they do in the case of Labour candidates.'¹ The Party's trade unionist organization was reformed and expanded to encourage Conservative trade unionists, numbered in millions, to take a full part in the normal activities of their unions and to ensure that they could play an active part in the counsels of the Party. The Young Conservatives were developed into not only the largest voluntary political youth movement in the world, but also the most influential, since they were accorded constitutional representation and voice at all levels of the Party organization. With the well-organized Federation of University Associations they came to form the spearhead, if not the Praetorian Guard, of Conservative advance.

Meanwhile a ferment of ideas, orthodox and heretical, enabled the Party to redefine its position in relation to the problems and challenge of the post-war world. Sir Winston Churchill's Fulton speech, though coolly received at the time, looked ahead to the Atlantic Alliance and the policy of 'con-

1. R. T. McKenzie, *British Political Parties*. London (Heinemann), 1955, p. 252.

tainment' of Russian expansion. With Mr Macmillan and other Conservative Opposition leaders, he was a dominant figure in the early strivings for a policy of greater unity in Europe. In successive speeches Sir Anthony Eden developed the domestic policy theme of a 'property-owning democracy' as the right way to popularize capitalism and counter nationalization. Under the powerful influence of Mr R. A. Butler, in his dual capacity as Chairman of the Party's Policy Committee and of its Research Department, a series of latter-day 'Tamworth Manifestos' began to appear, headed by the *Industrial Charter* with its cautious and middle-of-the-road plans 'to substitute for the present paralysis, in which we are experiencing the worst of all worlds, a system of free enterprise which is on terms with authority, and which reconciles the need for central direction with the encouragement of individual effort'. In Parliament, the One Nation Group succeeded the Tory Reform Committee as champions of forward-looking and realistic social policies. Outside, the Conservative Political Centre became the recognized channel for a continuous two-way movement of ideas between the rank and file and the leaders, and the publishing house for political pamphlets challenging comparison with the Fabian tracts.

The swing of the electoral pendulum, indecisive in 1950, decisive in 1951, was not, then, the simple product of a revulsion against the failures of Socialism in practice; it marked also a positive revival of Conservatism, rethought in modern terms and restated in modern idiom.

Yet it is the essential strength of Conservatism that, whilst its methods are empirical and its policies responsive to the pace of change, its philosophy is anchored to eternal precepts; and it was perhaps to the most important of these that Sir Winston Churchill reverted in the final paragraph of his 1951 manifesto:

I close with a simple declaration of our faith. *The Conservative and Unionist Party stands not for any section of the people but for all.* In this spirit, we will do our utmost to grapple with the increasing difficulties into which our country has been plunged.

In saying this he was obeying Disraeli's injunction that the

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Conservative Party must be a national Party or nothing, and implying that, whatever other failings there might be in doctrine or practice, his Government would regard itself as the servant of the people not its master, that there would be no section of them for whom it did not care a tinker's cuss, and certainly none whom it would presume to regard as lower than vermin.

The Conservative Party is a national Party not only by conviction, but also by composition. In particular, 'The Conservative Party is nearer to an even balance of social classes in its supporters'¹ than the Labour Party. All Parties are coalitions. The Conservative Party is more of a coalition than most. In contrast the radical Parties of the day are relatively monolithic. They are formed of cocksure, complacent, arrogant minorities, determined to impose their will on their fellow countrymen in the name of the popular fallacy of the moment. Even where they are the largest organized minorities, their rule has always proved intolerable as often as it has been experienced.

The task of Conservative statesmanship, on the other hand, is the organization and deployment of the unorganized majority in the country. By comparison with the problem of the 'Left', ours is infinitely the more difficult. But by the like token it is infinitely the more worthwhile. The difficulty consists in knitting together the policies which will really represent the various interests of the coalition – those, for instance, of our six to seven million trade union and working-class supporters with the equal numbers of professional, middle-class, business, agricultural, and salaried voters. It is infinitely more worthwhile, because the result must necessarily approximate to the true interests of the nation itself. The Labour Party must inevitably produce a class policy. If the Conservative Party is to survive at all, it is bound to attempt a national policy.

The Conservative Government had therefore to aim at a policy which really did all of three not easily reconcilable things. It had to make life tolerable for the middle class; it had to protect working-class standards and employment; and it had, in order to succeed in either, to deal with the inflationary spiral

1. Bonham, *The Middle Class Vote*. London (Faber) 1954, p. 174.

and defend the position of the pound as an international currency.

Inflation had become the great blot upon the post-war years, in exactly the same way as unemployment had marred the pre-war years, but it had directly hit a different, smaller and unorganized section of the community. The chief and immediate victims were those members of the middle classes whose incomes, even if not fixed, could not remotely keep pace with the cost of living, and those who in retirement were cheated out of the true value of a lifetime's thrift or of their social service benefits. The great majority of wage-earners had been able on the other hand, through the processes of collective bargaining in conditions of full employment, to opt out of the immediate effects of inflation, though it is fair to add that in the years of Socialism prices on average did rise rather more than wages. Nevertheless, it was clear that in the end it would be the wage-earners who would suffer most and suffer worst if, with the end of the sellers' market and the revival of fierce international competition, domestic inflation were allowed to go uncurbed and price our goods out of export markets, for nothing would so surely bring mass unemployment in its train.

In the fight against inflation Conservatives, instead of using the elaborate system of physical controls which proved totally inadequate under the Socialists, have returned to the use of a flexible monetary policy. The main feature of this has been varying interest rates based on changes in Bank rate; but these have when necessary been reinforced by other measures to control credit, such as funding operations to influence the liquidity of the money market, the credit 'squeeze' to limit bank advances and the borrowing of new money, the refusal to finance inflation in the nationalized industries, and restrictions on hire purchase. Whenever the pressure of demand grew too strong, such measures were vigorously applied; when it grew too weak and recession threatened, the measures were relaxed and a stimulus given to the economy. It has been complained that this policy of 'chopping and changing' revealed a Government uncertain of its own mind and policy; one might with equal justification complain of the driver of a motor car that he used

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both the accelerator and the brake. If the underlying policy is to go forward *safely*, then both are needed.

At the same time, Conservatives have sought, as is appropriate in a democratic society, to educate public opinion about the inflationary effects of wages and other incomes, or profits, rising faster than productivity. The White Paper on *The Economic Implications of Full Employment*¹, Mr Macmillan's appeal for cooperation from all sections of the community to stay on the 'price plateau', and the establishment of the Council on Prices, Productivity, and Incomes to give the nation impartial and expert reports, form part of this educative effort towards voluntary restraint.

It would be absurd to pretend that the success of these policies had been anything but uneven, or that the problem of reconciling maximum employment with maximum stability of prices had been finally solved. It is, in truth, not susceptible of final solution, since, as Mr Macmillan has put it, to steer a middle way between the Scylla of inflation and the Charybdis of deflation 'is an exercise in political pilotage which will continue so long as anyone is likely to be able to see ahead.'² Nevertheless, Conservatives are entitled to claim that in the seven years from mid-1952, when Mr Butler first brought inflation under control, to mid-1959 the retail price index rose only half as much as it did in the six years of Socialist 'planning' (20 per cent as against 40 per cent); that three times within this period, from mid-1952 to mid-1954, from spring 1956 to spring 1957 and from spring 1958 to mid-1959, prices were either nearly or entirely stable; and that by the end of the period *The Economist* was able to report:

The opportunity of stopping wage and price inflation is now greater than it has been at any time since the war.³

The Labour Government had attempted to fight inflation without the use of the monetary mechanism, and had attempted instead to cut spending power by increasing taxation and running a vast Budget surplus. This policy failed, because high

1. 1956, Cmd, 9725..

2. London, 12 March 1958.

3. 30 May 1959.

taxation reduced saving rather than spending, and at the same time reduced incentives. The contrast with Conservative policy could scarcely be more marked. The details may be left aside, since, as Lord Morley once observed, 'there is something repulsive to human nature in the simple reproduction of defunct Budgets'; but the broad facts must be recorded, and they are these. The Socialists introduced eight Budgets, and five of them put taxes up. The Conservatives have introduced nine Budgets, and seven of them have brought taxes down. When the Socialists left office nearly a third of the gross national product was being taken in national taxation. Eight years later under the Conservatives the proportion so taken is less than a quarter. Put in another way, if the Conservatives had maintained the rates of tax which the Socialists thought desirable in 1951, the country would be paying in 1959 an extra £1,300 million to the Exchequer – an average of twenty-eight shillings more a week from every family in the land.

It is a typical, and typically stupid, Socialist accusation that these tax changes have benefited the rich but not the poor. A moment's reflection should suffice to establish the fact that it is not only the rich who buy kitchen goods and writing paper, lipstick and face cream, razor blades and shaving soap, dolls and toys, clocks and lamps, lino and wallpaper, gas fires, television sets and bicycles, upon all of which goods the purchase tax has been brought down; that it is not only the rich who go to the cinema, watch football matches, or play cricket, upon all of which activities the tax has been cut or abolished; and that it is not only the rich who drink beer, upon which the duty has been reduced. As for income tax, it is of course the case that it is impossible to reduce a working man's obligation to pay it if he is already exempt from doing so, but it is also the case that the starting point of income tax was raised between 1951 and 1958 from £137 to £180 p.a. for a single man, from £238 to £309 for a married man without children, and from £413 to £630 for a married man with two children between 11 and 16.

The combined result of the slowing down of inflation and the reduction of taxes has been to benefit every section of the

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community, which is the point I am chiefly intent upon establishing. To the wage-earner, the main benefit has been in the diminution of the chief threat to his employment, which comes from rising costs; but in addition, taking changes in earnings, taxes, and prices into account, the typical worker in industry can now buy about 20 per cent more goods each week than he could when the Conservative Government took office in 1951. So far as the professional salaried middle classes are concerned, a recent investigation into their net incomes, allowing for price changes and tax reductions, concluded that 'in nearly every profession, the rise since 1951 in the net income after tax of a given grade of professional employee has been greater than the rise, amounting to slightly over one-quarter, which has taken place in the cost of living during the same period.'¹ For those living on small fixed incomes, the attack on inflation has been accompanied since 1951 by a rise in income from dividends, interest, and rent, and a wide variety of special tax reliefs – the small income relief, which gave those with incomes up to £300 the benefit of the earned income relief of two-ninths on any of their income coming from investments; the age relief, which allowed people over 65, with a total income under £800, to count investment income as earned income; the age exemption, which removed from tax altogether single people over 65 with incomes under £275, and married people over 65 with incomes under £440; and the relief of tax on that part of annuities representing repayment of capital. Finally, since 1951 the pensioner has not only been compensated for the rise in the cost of living, but has also had some share in the rising standard of living. The purchasing power of the 1946 pension (26/-) fell by about 6/- before the Labour Government gave a small increase of 4/- to some but not all retirement pensioners in 1951 just before the General Election. Since 1951 the retirement pension has been raised by the Conservative Government three times, and to-day the single pension is worth over 10/- more in real value than the pension being given when the Labour Government left office. Successive improvements have also been made in the pensions of retired public servants.

1. *Financial Times*, 14 November 1958.

CONSERVATIVE ACHIEVEMENT

Even before the 1955 election, which returned the Conservative Government to power with an increased majority, foreign commentators were lauding not only the fabulous success in restoring prosperity but also the equitable way in which prosperity was spread:

The British people to-day enjoy a prosperity unknown in their history; they have come nearer than any other people to exiling poverty from their land; they are thus equipped to continue to play the rôle of a great power on the world stage; and finally, they expect the future to be a bit better yet. . . .

When the present Tory Government took office in 1951, the British Treasury presented it with the immediate forecast for the nation's future: total bankruptcy likely in about six months. The face, the stride, and the mood of London to-day make such reasonable prognoses (and they were reasonable) seem like the rude arithmetic of a backward schoolchild. No capital in Europe reflects more wealth or strength of spirit. . . .

*As befits prosperity wrought by a whole people, its material blessings are shared by all in a measure never dreamed of in British history.*¹

What less could they say to-day when bulging shops have replaced the memory of the ration-book (then only just abolished); when two million new homes have been built (sufficient to house the entire populations of Glasgow, Cardiff, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Portsmouth, Leicester, Nottingham, Plymouth, Aberdeen, and Liverpool); when nine million television aerials have risen above the roof-tops (a set in every other home); when nearly one family in three now owns a car; when every year a million radio sets, seventy million gramophone records, a million vacuum cleaners, and a million electric shavers are sold; when two and a half million people are annually holidaying abroad; when, in a nutshell, the British people are earning, eating, producing, buying, building, growing, and saving more than ever they did under Socialism, more than they ever have in their history, and more than almost any other people ever have in the history of the world.

1. *Life*, 12 December 1954.

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It is upon this basis of solid achievement that the Conservative Party announced in its 1955 election manifesto, and subsequently proclaimed in dozens of pamphlets and from hundreds of platforms, that within a generation the British people could be twice as well off, could enjoy a double measure of the good things of life, and fulfil more and more of their personal hopes and ambitions. But the continuance of the momentum of progress, it was insisted, demanded the continuance of the methods by which, under Conservatism, such progress had been won:

No less unalterably do we believe that this promise can become achievement only if the fresh winds of freedom and opportunity are allowed to blow vigorously through the economy.

In this belief we have removed from off the back of the trader, the farmer, the businessman, and the private citizen the whole Socialist paraphernalia of burdensome and complex controls. We have cut back State trading, reopened the commodity markets and abolished the last vestiges of rationing both of food and fuel.

We have brought the discredited process of nationalizing industries to a full stop, and denationalized where this was the best course...

We have overhauled the costly and top-heavy machine of Big Brotherism which we inherited from the Socialists, reducing the number of Government departments by four, shrinking the Civil Service to its smallest size for seventeen years, and making hundreds of economies...

Our policy has been successful. That Conservative freedom works is not just a slogan, it is a fact.¹

This proper emphasis upon the virtues of economic freedom, this call to go *Onward in Freedom*, requires to be modified or supplemented in two important respects. In the first place, it might suggest a much more rapid and much less discriminatory rejection of controls than in fact took place. Though the Conservative Government first took office in 1951, it was not until 1954 that food rationing and building licensing were finally abolished, not until 1957 that the rent freeze began to be effectively thawed, not until 1958 that the system of agricultural supervision and dispossession was

1. *Onward in Freedom*, a Statement by the Conservative and Unionist Party, September 1958, pp. 19-20.

abandoned, and not until 1959 that the last of the emergency economic powers surviving from wartime were statutorily defined and delimited. There was no doctrinaire helter-skelter 'dash for freedom'; there was orderly, steady, even cautious, progress in the right direction. Moreover, in one important respect the economic powers of the State were reinforced; for, though physical controls were gradually abandoned, monetary controls, as we have seen, came into their own again in the Conservative fight against inflation. I do not think Conservatives were guilty of an inconsistency in postulating as their objective economic freedom as the condition of industrial enterprise, but regulation through the supply of money as the means whereby in the last resort political authority can stabilize conditions in which free industrial enterprise can flourish. Nor do I think Conservatives were wrong to reject a doctrinaire approach to the nationalized industries, denationalizing steel and road haulage, but striving conscientiously to administer the others under conditions of public ownership. Whether they can be permanently defended in a free society is another matter. But there were, and are, at least two valid and overwhelming reasons why they must be accepted for the time being – the insecurity which must necessarily accompany their return to private enterprise so long as renationalization is part of our opponents' programme, and the constitutional undesirability of a see-saw taking place economically on the occasion of every General Election.

The second and more important point that needs to be made about the expansion of freedom is that it has been as marked (though also as gradual and empirical) in external as in internal economic arrangements. For a nation such as Britain, dependent as none other is or ever has been, upon international trade, the removal of impediments to trade is vital. Abroad, therefore, Conservatives have worked actively to bring about a freer system of trade and payments, and thus to give our exporters wider opportunities. Most of our imports have been freed from control, the commodity markets (for example, for cotton, wool, grain, metals, and gold) have been reopened, and quantitative restrictions on trade have almost all been removed,

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first on trade with the O.E.E.C. countries and latterly on trade with dollar countries.

Continuing this theme of expansion through freedom, the Conservative Government took the initiative in negotiations for the creation of a European industrial Free Trade Area. Despite the significant obstacles to agreement which emerged, they have announced themselves still firmly convinced of the overriding importance for the future of Europe of a multi-lateral solution which will provide for freedom of trade, including the progressive removal of tariffs, among all members of the O.E.E.C. Their aim, therefore, is to prevent Europe from being permanently split into competing trade blocs, and to provide a bridge between the six nations of the Common Market and the 'outer seven'.

In the Conservative view there is no conflict between the aim of encouraging trade in particular parts of the world – no question, for example, as is sometimes suggested, of choosing whether we trade with the Commonwealth or with Europe. All past economic history – and certainly, as we have seen, the history of the years which followed the Ottawa agreements – shows that the more countries of the Commonwealth trade with one another, the more they can trade with the rest of the world. This theme of economic interdependence and the aim of overall expansion in world trade were stressed at the Montreal Conference held in 1958:

Commonwealth countries all wish to see rapid growth in the world as a whole since this is a condition for their own betterment. They all have a direct stake in the growth of world trade. They are all concerned that sterling, in which the trade of most of them is financed, should be strong. They all realize that these objectives call for close collaboration both between themselves and with other like-minded countries. For these reasons, the central theme that has run through our discussions in Montreal has been an expanding Commonwealth in an expanding world.

A world-wide system of freer trade must, it is recognized, march with freer payments; and it has therefore been the Conservative aim to re-establish sterling in a position so strong and respected that it can play its full part as a major international

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currency, financing more than 40 per cent of the world's trade. Since the Conservatives assumed office in 1951, Britain, together with the other members of the Commonwealth, has been working towards the full convertibility of sterling. In a word, it is not only necessary to 'set the people free', it is also necessary ultimately to 'set the pound free'. A number of steps have been taken towards this end, such as the enlargement of the transferable accounts area (members of which could use current earnings of sterling freely with each other), after 1955 the official support of the sterling rate in the free markets, and since 1958 the convertibility of non-resident sterling.

From this catalogue of themes and events there are three important lessons (or three aspects of the same lesson) to be drawn. The first is the inextricable connexion for a great trading nation between national and international economic policies. In 1949, it will be recalled, under conditions of Socialist 'planning', the pound sterling had to be devalued because the internal weakness of our economy, debilitated by Daltonian inflation, was unable to withstand a mild American recession. In 1958, on the other hand, the internal economy, freed from physical controls, but with inflation wrung out of it by rigorous monetary policy, was able to weather a severe world-wide recession in world trade, and at the end of it our currency, so far from being devalued, was made freely transferable for non-residents. The second lesson, which we could equally well draw from the conditions of the inter-war years, is the paramountcy of international trading conditions so far as the maintenance of employment in this country is concerned. There is much that a Government can do, by wise use of the Budget and of monetary mechanisms, by easing the mobility of labour, and by speeding the diversification of industry, to mitigate the effects of a fall in world trade – and it is significant that few industrialized countries in the world got through the 1958 recession with as little consequent unemployment as we did. But a nation which has no indigenous raw materials to speak of, except coal and a little iron ore, and has to import nearly half its food, cannot shelter indefinitely behind a barricade of controls, quotas, and tariffs. To expand world trade and to

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strengthen the credit have to support such an expansion, above all to maintain confidence in its currency – these are the conditions of success. The third lesson to be drawn, therefore, is that Socialist ‘planning’, with its hankering after State bulk-buying, bilateral trading agreements, and import controls, is restrictionist and therefore irrelevant, or actually damaging, to our prospects and prosperity. This prosperity depends on a world-wide trade connexion, composed of individual strands infinitely various and extremely sensitive. The ‘planning’ authority is a national authority. Our trade, which is international, cannot be founded on national ‘planning’ in this sense without profoundly altering its character and, Conservatives would add, diminishing its extent. The fatal silliness, in other words, of so-called democratic Socialism is that it fails, like the mercantilism of old, to see that economic enterprise is essentially international, not insular, and that to make the State the basis of economic activity, except in a few instances, is to condemn human society to develop into a series of inward-looking, restrictionist, and mutually hostile national Socialist economies.

Every stage in the march towards freedom has been accompanied by a groaning chorus of dismal prognostications from Socialist leaders and leader-writers. When eggs were derationed the late Maurice Webb, who had himself been a Socialist Minister of Food, forecast that they would be 8d., 10d., or even 1/- in the worst part of the year and that ordinary householders would not be able to obtain them at all.¹ When butter was derationed the political correspondent of the *Daily Herald* (who later earned even greater fame from what he had gleaned on the road to Brighton pier) estimated that it would cost 6/- a lb.² When the Conservative Party announced that its policy was to ‘set the builders free’, Mr Bevan declared that, if they did so they would not get 300,000 houses, or even 100,000 houses, but only housing riots.³ When the Rent Bill was passing through Parliament, the chief Socialist spokesman, Mr Mitchison, was among those who prophesied that over a period every pavement would be dotted with tenants and their fami-

1. *Daily Herald*, 26 November 1952.

2. 29 October 1953.

3. *Hansard*, 6 November 1950.

lies evicted from their homes.¹ Whenever a physical control was dropped, whenever a fiscal control was imposed, mass unemployment, even a million unemployed, was predicted; and when the decisions were taken to make sterling partially convertible in 1958 Mr Gaitskell's voice was heard glumly foretelling:

They will be bad for Europe and bad for Britain. Before long we shall regret them.²

Every one of these scares has been falsified in the event. Truly it may be said again that the Left was never right.

By contrast, it is not any part of my case to prove that in the same period the Right was never wrong. What Conservatives can and do claim is that there has never been a period of eight years in the history of this island when things have sprung forward with a bound equal to that we have made, that compared with this period the years of Socialism, even judged by its own standards, were years of relative faltering or downright failure, and that significant figures prove it.

Nobody doubts that Britain depends for her very livelihood upon her international trade; and for every £1 that our trading accounts were 'in the red' under the Labour Government, they are more than £2 on the right side under the Conservative Government. Nobody doubts that our productive capacity and social building depend upon our rate of investment; and for every £1 of net investment in 1951 we are investing nearly 35/- to-day. Nobody doubts that a high volume of savings is the only way to finance investment without inflation, as well as being a good yard-stick of the nation's faith in its own future; and in each of the past three years personal savings have been higher than in all the six years of Socialism put together.

No Socialist scare was more persistent than the forecast that the Tories would 'slash' the social services; yet expenditure on social provision is up by about 20 per cent in *real* terms. No Conservative pledge was more derided by the Socialists than our promise to increase their housing target by 50 per cent; yet for every home provided by the Labour Government, two have

1. Standing Committee A, 19 February 1957.

2. *The Times*, 29 December 1958.

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been provided by the Conservative. No Socialist excuse for this achievement was more common than that we were merely building houses at the expense of schools; yet for every school built by the Socialists, five have been built by us. No Socialist claim has been more arrogantly put forward than their 'paternity' of the National Health Service; yet in their whole period not one single new general or mental hospital was built, whereas under Conservative Government there are at least ten major new hospitals and over thirty large modernization and extension schemes under way. No piece of propaganda has been more sedulously or irresponsibly spread about than that which depicts the plight of the old-age pensioner; yet the single pensioner, even with no other resources, is to-day 10/- a week better off in real terms than he was in 1951, and the married couple 14/- a week better off.

Carlyle once quoted the 'witty statesman' who said that 'you might prove anything by figures'. I am content only to prove what I hold to be beyond denial or dispute, that in every sphere of the national life affecting the well-being of the people, we have deserved well of the electorate, and infinitely better than our Socialist predecessors, who are ever so confident in polemic, and ever so calamitous in performance.

22. THE WORLD CHALLENGE

WE are members of a great and historic community – great, because, whatever the failures and shortcomings of the past or the future, the name and prowess of the English-speaking peoples will be remembered as long as the deeds of man are canvassed on human lips; historic, because our culture and tradition is neither a matter of a generation like that of Soviet Russia, nor of a bare century and a half like that of the United States. Nevertheless, the foundations of the most surely established and glorious societies are always more precarious than they seem. Society is built upon foundations never very hard to overthrow. This is perhaps one of the very few safe lessons of history. The edifice of greatness, however imposing, is maintained by ties more fragile and unstable still.

For nearly a century, from June 1815 to August 1914, our country was virtually at peace. The wars in which she engaged distant, limited, and not threatening any vital interest. The cataclysm which broke over the world in 1914 changed all that. Since then we have never really known what it was to be secure. The world has been shaken by anarchy and menaced with tyranny. The danger of tyranny has been infinitely increased since it took on the form of the Communist conspiracy against mankind. To every threat Britain was and remains a defendant. To every tyrant she was and remains a foe, because she is an apostle of human freedom. To every anarchical force in the world she was and remains opposed, because she stands for law and order. So she has stood in two world wars, and two periods of uneasy peace, often bewildered, long unhappy, frequently criticized and misrepresented, sometimes faltering in her own vision, but still alive, and, because alive, still bearing her message of ordered freedom in the distracted and darkening world of the twentieth century.

Our survival and victory in this age of anarchy and war have been bought at a fearful price. I do not refer now to the

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human tribute of blood paid by almost every family in the land. But viewed only in grossly material terms, almost every prop which supported our existence in the nineteenth century has been knocked away. From being the most impregnable of European communities, we have developed into one of the most vulnerable in the world. From possessing a currency more solidly based on gold than any other, we are now bankers operating a medium of exchange which, because two world wars have removed our overseas resources, is more dependent on confidence and more sensitive to balance of payments than any other. From being the pioneers of primary industry, we are now the suppliers of machinery and services in competition with half a dozen others to a rapidly industrializing world. From being the political masters of a quarter of the earth's surface, we are now watching the political ideas we brought into being giving birth in every continent to national communities which have changed the Empire into a Commonwealth, even when they have not dissolved political unity altogether. From an island fortress defended by an invincible fleet we have become one of the most ideal targets for every weapon of modern war, of which the nuclear bomb is only one.

It may well be that if we had kept all these material advantages, we should have become degenerate and corrupt as others who have held power before us. At all events, they are gone now, and they will never return in our day. The questions which confront us now are therefore fundamental. Can we sink back into mere mediocrity as if the glories of the past had never been? Can we accept a diminished national prestige and influence in the councils of the world? Are we to solve our problems by quietly abandoning our responsibilities? Are we to acquiesce in relegation to the status of a third-rate power? I sometimes feel that this might represent the real policy of the Labour Party if it were ever explicitly announced, and certainly it would be difficult to discover any of its members who were quite unaffected with any of its principal tenets. But to each of these questions, and to such a policy for the future, Conservatism offers a defiant, uncompromising, and determined 'no'. This 'no' does not represent a Canute-like re-

fusal to acknowledge the realities of the twentieth century, or a desperate clinging to the last tattered rags of former grandeur. It represents a dogged realism which understands that there is no safety, no security, no prosperity, and perhaps no survival for us without a courage and genius matching the magnitude of our peril. It represents a determination that, shorn of our past advantages, we must deliberately and consciously set ourselves to inaugurate a new age of greatness for the people of this island, in keeping with our traditions and moral principles, but viable in the modern world.

Nor need we despair for one moment of our power to do precisely this. The true strength of a nation lies in its productive capacity, and in the genius, qualifications, skill, enterprise, and moral purpose of its people. Judged by these standards, we have rarely been so powerful or so wealthy as we are to-day.

What is more, and, as I believe, much more, there is a sense in which the very difficulties and dangers that we face enhance our inherent spiritual strength. We speak in the modern world with nothing less than commanding moral authority. There is no people so certainly menaced with destruction in the event of another war as ours. Neither India nor China is so menaced, and even Russia and America would not, I believe, suffer comparably. It is an unenviable position, but it is one thrust upon us by the facts of geography and history. Terrible as this vulnerability is, it ultimately makes the British Parliament and the British Prime Minister for certain purposes the authentic spokesmen of the human race. It is we who must say, and who do so in plain terms, both that we mean to survive without war, and also that if the ultimate values of civilization were to be destroyed by Communism and paganism, it would not be worthwhile securing our survival. It is thus we who hold the key position.

There is another sense in which this is so. In the world situation to-day there are just three forces for good: the British Commonwealth, Western Europe, and the United States. On their ability to win the hearts and minds of mankind for our own precious ideal of liberty under the law hang the real hopes

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and chances of the human race. And it so happens that in each of these three forces Britain – and Britain alone among the nations – has played an indispensable rôle in the past, which at the same time points unmistakably to a vital rôle in the future.

If Conservatives look to the eventual emergence of a genuine world order, they are likely to find its pattern in the British Commonwealth of nations. In their genuine welcome to the new nations of that Commonwealth, Conservatives do not forget the old. It is right that we should seek to forge and maintain links of trade and politics to these friends and sister nations. But let no one deny or doubt that the sentiments which subsist between us are deeper and more powerful and more influential for good than any links of trade can foster or any purely political ties express. It was not economics or politics which brought the Anzacs to Gallipoli, the Canadians to Passchendaele or Dieppe, the New Zealanders to Crete, the Australians to Tobruk, the South Africans to the Desert, or which brought much needed support to the United Kingdom in New York in 1956. In human life the ties of affection are paramount. Twice over in a lifetime we in the British Commonwealth have been willing to live and die together. There is no reason to doubt the strength of a bond which is stronger than life itself.

But the Commonwealth is not only an affair of the British, nor even of European elements like the French in Canada and the Afrikaans in South Africa. It is now also the most important multi-racial community in the world, containing peoples of every continent, religion, and colour. It has in particular the chance to prove, through the institutions of partnership in Central Africa and elsewhere, that colour, which is a distinction of nature, need not in itself involve any political division of mankind. The success of this experiment constitutes the card of re-entry of Western freedom to the hearts of the peoples of Asia and Africa, to whom the Communists are wont to appeal in most beguiling guise.

Conservatives do not underestimate the difficulties or even the limitations of the new nations. We are not wholly un-

critical of them or the colourful and sometimes rather brash personalities they throw up. But we believe it our duty to ensure, by sympathy and understanding, by help and support wherever they can be honestly given, that what matters in these countries is not their occasional aberrations, their individual peculiarities, or even their rare and, we hope, short flirtations with false doctrines of race or colour or authority, but their continued professions of devotion to law, parliaments, open discussion, human rights, and social progress, which, let it be remembered, however they are denigrated, they first learned by their acquaintance with our institutions and our idealism and our civilization. These are powerful ties. They have withstood the ordeal by fire in Malaya and in Kenya. Let us not underestimate them now.

At the same time we should not allow our devotion to the Commonwealth to blind us to the truth that Communism is a conspiracy not only against us but against all those who are, in the words of the preamble to the North Atlantic Treaty, 'determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.' It would be idle to pretend that there are not rifts within the European family, which unhappily the impulse to economic unity has so far and in some respects widened rather than bridged. Yet Conservatives are convinced that the purpose of European cooperation is not primarily economic; its purpose is to ensure the continuance of those moral values of Christendom without which life as we know it would cease to be life at all, and that system of defence against aggression which would not fail to take advantage of European weakness.

The same broad visions must also animate our attitude to the people of the United States. It would be equally idle to pretend that there was no anti-Americanism in Britain in extreme circles of the Left or Right, as it would be foolish to conceal the existence of Anglophobia in certain extreme circles in the United States. Yet again I am persuaded that he who is against Britain is no friend to America, and he who is against America is an enemy to the continued greatness and

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even survival of Britain. The essential thing for both countries to realize is that their alliance is a sacred duty, owed by both not only to one another but to our common humanity, to the free nations who can only be preserved by its continuance, to the oppressed nations whose only hopes are bound up with its prospects, to the developed nations whose future is challenged by the lawlessness of raw nationalism, to the undeveloped nations because only this alliance can offer them progress without chains.

From the last analysis these three influences for good, the Commonwealth, Europe, and America, are all part of the same civilization. That civilization is one whole. No part of it could continue long without the others. But Conservatives believe that Britain has a key rôle to play in fostering and preserving that civilization, and that within Britain the destiny of the Conservative Party is to fit her to play it.

There are many who naturally regard this as an arrogant claim for a political Party. Not a few cynics would have us believe that we have even reached a stage where the choices offered to the electorate, particularly in international affairs, are nugatory. My case is that they have never been more momentous. For in the last resort, though Parties in a parliamentary democracy, competing as they do for the suffrages of a floating vote, tend to a certain moderation in the application of their principles, the choices presented to the voters are none the less significant for being sometimes marginal, and it is these choices which the electorate must now be prepared to discern and pronounce upon correctly.

In many respects it may be true that the question is not simply one of principle, but of practice. Thus the Labour Party is officially in favour of making and holding the nuclear bomb. This is a question of principle. But they also announced – long before there was any prospect of agreed suspension of tests – that they favoured unilateral abandonment of testing. This is a question of practice. Nevertheless, be it principle or practice, their policy would have ensured that we got the worst of both worlds. We should have had all the moral guilt which some people suppose attaches to the possession of a nuclear device,

without any of the practical advantages of knowing whether it worked or having one which was up-to-date or capable of effective delivery, and none of the influence in moderating the extension of the great antagonists which, it may be, we now possess.

Thus, too, I have no doubt that Labour does not wish to destroy NATO, or to yield to Krushchev over Berlin, or to cause a war in Europe. These are questions of principle. But as a matter of practice they have also committed themselves to a detailed plan for European disengagement, which might well have the effect of detaching the Federal Republic from the alliance, and either creating a dangerous vacuum or else a fully-armed Germany determined to play off the East against the West. Both could only lead to an increased danger of war.

As a matter of principle the Labour Party would no doubt wish to keep our alliance with America. But in practice I feel sure they would undermine its solidarity by pressing for the immediate admission of Communist China to the United Nations and by publicly attacking the United States Government instead of offering, as we do, private consultation and advice.

Obviously the Labour Party is in favour of negotiation with the Russians, at the Summit or otherwise, in an attempt to ease tensions and settle disputes. The principle is not at issue. What is at issue is the practical capacity of the Labour leadership to do this with even a semblance of dignity, let alone success. Or whether if they did achieve this they could manage to carry with them the allies whose participation in any decision would be indispensable to its effectiveness.

Certainly the Socialists say that they would be anxious to extend the helping hand to the underdeveloped nations of the world, both as a moral duty and as a counter to Communist pressure and subversion. But their practical contribution to this task, which requires the creation of wealth for loans, grants, and investment, would, I believe, be to destroy private enterprise, heighten taxation, and undermine the currency by excessive expenditure.

These, as I have said, are matters of practice, and not of

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principle. But the ultimate question which presents itself is how far a nation pursuing the principles of so-called democratic Socialism is really fit to carry the banner of the civilization to which most Socialists are no doubt as devoted as we.

No doubt Sir Winston Churchill made an error by the broadcast in which he seemed to be saying that democratic Socialism, carried to its logical conclusion, would mean the knock of the Gestapo at the door, the secret police, and the people's court. This of course was because, if he had really been trying to say that the amiable figures then at the head of the Labour Party, the Attlees, the Bevins, the Morrisons would be guilty of such wickedness, the suggestion would have been absurd. Even if the logical conclusion of democratic Socialism had been just what Sir Winston said, these men could be trusted not to carry Socialism to its logical conclusion.

I have no doubt of this. But I find myself asking the question just the same, and if the answer be that we know the Labour Party, unlike the Communists, would not carry things to such extremes, the conclusion drawn may be that democratic Socialism, if not, like Communism, inherently evil, because it is democratic, is ultimately fatuous because it aims at objectives incompatible with democracy which for that very reason it will lack the will to carry out.

I do not believe that the fourfold recipe of controls, nationalization, higher taxation, and welfare payments represents a viable policy to Britain in the modern world.

Democratic Socialism depends on the planning and coercive power of the modern national state. But trade is international and transcends frontiers. Currency is based on confidence and cannot in the end be defended by controls, especially in a country like our own whose currency is used not by ourselves alone, but with equal freedom by the free nations of a commonwealth. The modern state is inadequate as a means of planning. Compulsion breaks down when it seeks to cross a frontier.

But can industry be centrally planned at all in time of peace? I should have thought myself that detailed planning required a greater knowledge of the direction of demand and invention than even a government can readily acquire. But even if I am

wrong about this there is a fundamental difficulty. In countries simpler than ours and not democratic, demand is predictable because it is controlled, both in direction and extent. But if the consumer is to be left free to buy, and the wage-earner free to negotiate his wage, where is the control which can make demand predictable? And if not, where is the freedom which would make Socialism democratic?

It is abundantly clear from the experience of the last twelve years that the future of industry does not lie in more nationalization. The relationship between the state and voluntary effort has reached a degree of sophistication for which this ancient concept is altogether too crude and unworkable. The best thing would be for the Labour Party to scrap it altogether. But unfortunately this is impossible, since research has revealed that nationalization of the means of production, distribution, and exchange is part of the venerable goatskin enveloping the ark of the covenant. The result is an extraordinary series of contradictions, evasions, and double talk which not the most diligent enquiry has so far succeeded in reducing to intelligibility. But what clearly emerges is the resolute refusal of the rank and file to abandon the totems to which they must pay accustomed obeisance. As Mr Bevan has observed :

It must never be forgotten that the heart and centre of Socialism is public ownership.¹

and

The only thing [*sic*] which distinguishes the Labour and Socialist movement from our Conservative opponents is the fundamental question of public ownership. If we do not believe in it there is nothing very serious separating ourselves from the Tories.²

Thus has emerged a strange amalgam of statements at the lowest promising to submit to 'public control' an unpublished list of 600 companies together amounting to no less than one-half of the private sector of industry, coupled with a compulsory take-over bid to buy their shares, and containing an additional threat to nationalize any industry which, after election, a

1. *Tribune*, 26 September 1952. 2. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 27 May 1956.

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Labour Government may please to discover as having 'failed the nation'. This is a hangman's mandate permitting each industry to be bumped off in turn – those who have amalgamated because they are monopolies, those who have not because competition is wasteful, those who make losses because they are inefficient, and those with none because it will be good business to take them over, the older industries because they are only matters of administration in which there is no scope for enterprise, and the newer because they are new and their virgin purity must not be sullied by any taint of profit. In so far as it is a threat this pernicious policy would dry up the sources of wealth and investment by creating the maximum timidity and disheartenment even amongst those ultimately unaffected by it. Carried out, it would turn Britain into a nation whose economy and, ultimately, whose society was not markedly different from those with which we are supposed to be in competitive coexistence.

But, above all, I wonder whether the democratic Socialist has really answered or, perhaps, even asked the necessary questions about opportunity and reward in a democratic society. Is he for equality of opportunity? If so, he can scarcely believe in equality of reward. Yet his whole history and much of his own programme and literature proclaim him as an advocate of just this most stultifying form of social injustice. In a world of full employment the social services are surely a springboard, an insurance, and a safety net. As a form of redistribution of wealth they are outdated until the dole queue returns.

We live in the age of the qualified man and woman, the man and woman who has earned a place of respect in society by some socially desirable skill or qualification of hand or brain. But, although educational opportunity may be provided equally for all, skill and qualifications are not easily acquired. Nor, when they are acquired, is the responsibility they carry easily discharged. The grammar-school boy who ploughs through the mass of material required for his G.C.E., or, later, for his degree or his Diploma of Technology has, compared with those at each stage who cannot or will not make the grade, a hard, and in the short run, an unrewarding life to lead. Less leisure,

less fun, lower earnings are the immediate consequences of ambitious and enterprising youth. The prizes at the end of the course must be sufficiently attractive if there are to be enough runners in the race. Experience seems to show that democratic socialism proves excessively egalitarian in practice. Its policies and doctrine seem to argue also an excessive egalitarianism in theory. Certainly its appeal to the ideal of service seems to me to be a little hollow and hypocritical in this context. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and, if it is wrong for the individual to exploit society, it is surely far worse for society to exploit the individual by robbing him of the reward of his qualifications, and then to turn round and ask him to forgo his due by reminding him that virtue is its own reward.

Finally, it is impossible to ignore the personalities involved. I do not desire to disparage the leaders, though neither their public appearances nor the private revelations about their relationships with one another do much to inspire confidence. What worries me is the fundamental divergence between the various groups of followers, the trade union leaders pursuing their esoteric imperialisms, the fellow travellers who think of Moscow as the real centre of the modern world, the guilt-ridden who would sell Britain short, and the exhibitionists who would rather be Norwegian than British, or would publicly blackguard British troops in action. Is there an anti-British movement anywhere which has not had in the past few years a group of Labour Members of Parliament as their supporters or patron saints? Are they for the bomb or against it? Are they for the British expatriate abroad or against him? The question is not whether these are individually men and women of integrity and good faith. The question is whether they stand for the things which destroy Britain's interest or maintain it. Indeed, the question presents itself whether collectively they stand for anything at all.

At the Conservative Party Conference in 1958 I said that I did not believe that Socialism in this country could survive a third consecutive defeat. The absence of an organized Opposition would of course be an unmitigated disaster for our society. But I did not mean by that that the Labour Party

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would disappear, or even that it would necessarily stop calling itself a Socialist Party. I meant that the evil, fatuous spectre of democratic Socialism – that contradiction in terms which has dominated and befogged the political thinking of thirty years – would have finally been laid to rest. I hoped that after a third defeat the policy of nationalization, high taxation, and controls would have virtually no adherents left, and that with these would have gone the inverted snobbery of class consciousness, the attacks on liberty, opportunity, and freedom, the false denunciation of profit, the persecution complexes of the maladjusted who continue to consider themselves under-privileged simply because they are unsuccessful years after privilege has been abolished: above all, the whole concatenation of perverse thinking which leads men and women to denigrate British statesmanship, British enterprise, British imperial achievement, even British troops under fire whenever they are attacked by somebody else. I said:

By winning Operation Hat Trick we shall, I believe, have taken the robber castle of Socialism, torn down its battlements, stormed its keep, and liberated its dungeons. And though, like other men and women with our lives before us, there will no doubt be times in the future when we shall feel disappointed, we shall always be able to say to ourselves and one another that we were the army that finally dispelled the menace of Socialism from the free island of Britain and made it worth while for our children and our children's children to work together to build its future.¹

That is still the prize.

Now I turn to an altogether different body of men and women, and to a doctrine with whose expression every Conservative must sympathize:

Liberals do not believe that it is enough to counter Communist lies: they do not believe that it is enough to point out the advantages of living in Britain, nor even to preach the merits of democracy. Some positive alternative to Communism is needed. *The alternative is individual liberty and opportunity and the respect for each other's welfare and freedom which must go with it.*²

1. Blackpool, 11 October 1958.

2. J. Grimond, *The Liberal Future*. London (Faber) 1959, p. 152.

Although I have never myself tried to paper over differences, where I could see them, between myself and the expressed (and frequently variant) views of the Liberal Party, I would say that so far as it goes I agree with this thought, and I would venture to ask its author, the Leader of the Liberal Party, and every Liberal or uncommitted voter: How can this policy be forwarded to-day by the process of voting Liberal?

To vote Liberal will certainly not return a Liberal Government. Not even the most sanguine of the Party's supporters could hope in less than a generation to reverse the electoral trend of a half a century. This does not mean that Liberal votes cannot have their effect, but the effect they can have is upon the fortunes of other Parties, not upon their own. They might very well result, by splitting the anti-Socialist forces, in the return of a Labour Government, pledged to policies that are in direct defiance of the classic liberal doctrines of 'individual liberty and opportunity'. They might equally well result in the return of a Parliament in which no Party had a secure majority and the nation's voice in the councils of the world therefore depended on a Government dominated by the shifting intrigues and cabals of conflicting groups, each struggling to achieve a precarious mastery over its unstable equilibrium, but each incapable of forming any combination with any hope of more than a momentary ascendancy. Would this serve to protect the liberal tradition?

There is rarely room in politics for more than one great debate in a generation. The great debate of our time is Socialism – Socialism abroad in the form of the Communist conspiracy against humanity; Socialism at home in the form of the more honourable, but in the long run scarcely less calamitous, form adopted by the British Labour Party, the representative of that movement of democratic Socialism which has already failed all over Europe and not least in Britain. What is wanted, and it is the supreme need of our times, is a positive movement to defeat Socialism, but to defeat it not by purely negative and defensive attitudes of rejection, but by a positive insight and vision of the nature of man and of his adjustment to a twentieth-century environment in the light, not only of con-

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temporary technical knowledge, but also of traditional moral values. In this country I would ask, where can such a movement be found outside the Conservative Party, its feet firmly planted on the ground by the responsibilities of Government, but its eyes firmly fixed on the horizon by its constant intellectual activity, and I hope by something of the evangelistic fervour and conviction which my critics so rightly accuse me of trying as its Chairman to inject into its corporate life?

No one knows better than I do of our imperfections and shortcomings. But the point is that we exist as a Party aiming continuously and consciously at the right ends. The need is desperate, and for to-day; you cannot wait twenty-five years, which I estimate is the minimum time which would be required to build up a new movement of the requisite vitality and power to blow sufficient real life into the dying fires of the Liberal Party – even if, hidden in the embers, there were any real timber capable of exciting a blaze, and even if there were any guarantee that what you would create would be something better than our Party here and now. The battle would be lost before the new troops were mustered and ready for the field.

Of course, the great civilization which in this battle we are seeking to conserve, against ever-lengthening odds, the civilization of liberty under the law, owes much to the dedicated lives of great Liberal statesmen in the past. That is the very reason why the task of conserving this common heritage should not be left solely to Conservatives, and why in our statement *Onward in Freedom* we invited and adjured all liberal-minded men and women to march with us.

In this statement we accepted the Communist challenge of competitive coexistence, and showed how the inheritance of freedom might best be successfully conserved. Our Party said:

If the Soviet Union has been deterred from total war, it is largely because Britain and her friends in the free world have built up, maintained, and determined to preserve an effective system of collective security and an overall balance of arms.

But the challenge of Communism and the deterrent to it are far from consisting only of arms and armies. Ignorant credulity, viru-

lent anti-colonialism, and political instability cannot be exorcised by military defence. Neither can mass unemployment, poverty, hunger, and disease. Yet these are the tensions and troubles upon which Communism everywhere batten and thrives.

Therefore, against the ceaseless barrage of Communist propaganda, our voice must be heard in the world loud and clear. Against the dark imperialism that has enslaved a hundred million people since the war, we must present the shining example of the expanding Commonwealth. Against the Soviet offensive to outpace our economies, capture our markets, and strangle our trade, we must acknowledge that prosperity, like peace, is indivisible, and translate the concept of interdependence into world-wide economic strategy.

We accept the challenge of competitive coexistence. We are confident that it is not our system but the Communist system, based upon the unnatural denial and murderous suppression of freedom and the crudities of a material philosophy, that contains within itself the seeds of its own dissolution. Behind a shield adequate to our physical defence, we propose to develop the life and example of an altogether better society, liberal in spirit, united in purpose, bright in promise and abundantly rich in fulfilment.¹

This indeed is the challenge. There will be no peace in the world until we have overcome Communism. But the overcoming of Communism means superseding it as an idea in the minds and hearts of men, and neither the destruction of Communists nor the military conquest of Communist-dominated territories. Our physical weapons are for defence only. Our weapon of attack remains the sword of the spirit. Our hope of victory lies in the natural longing of men everywhere for freedom in place of oppression, for law in place of anarchy, for peace instead of hatred, for all three based on justice without which there can be neither freedom nor law nor peace among the cities of mankind.

I know that it is hard to see in something as prosaic as a political party the embodiment of ideals and principles as high as these. But it has been our lot, our privilege, perhaps even our misfortune, to be born into an heroic age when the old values of honour and decency, law, justice and morality, free-

1. *Onward in Freedom*. London (Conservative and Unionist Central Office) 1958, p. 9.

THE CONSERVATIVE CASE

dom and responsibility have to be fitted into the context of a new scientific civilization and shaped to the challenge of a new political dogma. Failure to achieve these objects could deprave and degrade human society for centuries and, it might be, for ever.

In this great task, our country has an indispensable rôle; for neither America can perform it, nor the Commonwealth survive, nor Europe continue to exist without Britain. It is my conviction, by which I would stand or fall, that the Conservative Party is called upon to undertake, and of all Parties alone is capable of undertaking, the decisive responsibility of making it possible for Britain to perform this task.

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Published at the same time as this:

THE LABOUR CASE

ROY JENKINS

This is a personal statement of why one M.P., describing himself as 'of rather moderate views', believes the return of a Labour Government to be urgently necessary. Mr Jenkins opens with a plea for the country to accept its new position in the world and not waste its substance chasing old glories; and he concludes with a controversial chapter 'Is Britain Civilized?' He gives calm and almost dispassionate views on foreign and colonial policy, the need for a rapidly growing economy and the means of attaining it, education, national superannuation, and the cost of the Labour Party's proposals. He does not affect to despise the motives or the intelligence of his opponents. (s177)

THE LIBERAL CASE

ROGER FULFORD

Mr Fulford's theme is that the door of Westminster must not be barred against the opinions of minorities. He believes that if we are to preach democracy effectively abroad, we should practise it at home, not leaving our politics to two parties because they are large and rich. He argues the case for electoral reform, and shows how a compact squad of Liberal members could influence and revive the House of Commons. He shows how the Liberal mind differs from the Conservative or Labour outlook, and emphasizes the glories of independence in our political system at this time. (s176)





Viscount Hailsham, P.C., Q.C. (formerly the Hon. Quintin Hogg), was born in 1907. He was educated at Eton (Scholar, Newcastle Scholar) and Christ Church, Oxford (Scholar), was President of the Oxford Union in 1929, became a Fellow of All Souls in 1931, and was called to the Bar in 1932. During the war he was commissioned in the Rifle Brigade and served with the Middle East Forces, being wounded in 1941. He was M.P. for Oxford City from the by-election of 1938 until he succeeded his father, the first Viscount, in 1950. He has been Joint Under-Secretary for Air, First Lord of the Admiralty, Minister of Education, and Lord President of the Council. He was appointed Chairman of the Conservative Party in 1957. His other works, on political and legal subjects, include *The Left was Never Right* (1945), *The Purpose of Parliament* (1946), and *The Law of Monopolies, Restrictive Practices Etc.* (1956). He is married and has four children.